

**A PROPOSED DOCTRINE FOR THE ATTACK OF A BUILT-UP AREA  
BY A ROAD DIVISION**

An abstract for a thesis presented to the Faculty of  
the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
degree of

**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE**

by

**WADE HAMPTON, Major, Infantry**

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

This study has a two fold objective: First, to evaluate the adequacy of current U. S. Army doctrine for the attack of a built-up area by a ROAD division. Second, in those cases where the present doctrine is found either inadequate or lacking, to develop appropriate doctrine.

The evaluation is based on the historical experiences of combat in cities during World War II. The first three chapters are studies of eight different cities in which combat took place, with the majority of the account devoted to the seizure of Brest, France.

The last two chapters compare present doctrine with the problems and techniques derived from the historical experiences, and develop doctrine in those areas found lacking.

The study found five areas that were either inadequately covered or not covered at all in present doctrine. They were:

1. A surprise thrust to the center of a city's defenses using the flexibility inherent in the ROAD division offers to the alert commander a great opportunity to quickly seize a built-up area. Historically, commanders that employed a surprise thrust were successful in seizing a city before it could be adequately defended.

2. Encirclement is the key to the successful capture of a built-up area. Commanders should attempt to envelop a city as soon as possible. In those cases where physical encirclement is impossible due to obstacles or manpower requirements, either a reconnaissance screen or artillery interdiction screen should be established to deprive the enemy free access to the built-up area.

3. Infiltration is an important means of tactical maneuver in a built-up area. This method of attack offers the commander the opportunity to take critical objectives with a minimum loss of personnel. It requires well trained troops and aggressive junior leaders to be correctly executed.

4. The intelligence effort plays an important role in the planning for an attack of a built-up area. This study found that many commanders were not aware of the enemy's city defense plan. In the case of Brest, France, commanders found that the tactics employed at the beginning of the siege had to be changed before the capture of the city. This was due primarily to a lack of intelligence appreciation on the part of commanders and principal staff officers. Current doctrine still does not place the required emphasis on this problem area.

5. The commander should consider two factors before selecting the formation for the attack. He must first allocate forces of sufficient strength to maintain pressure around the entire perimeter to prevent the enemy from shifting forces to the main attack area. He must then employ maximum firepower and forces at the selected point to rupture the enemy positions in multiple penetrations. The formation employed must have the majority of the combat force forward with a small mobile reserve positioned close behind the attacking elements.

It was definitely determined that the ROAD division augmented with special assault equipment, engineers, and artillery can perform effectively in a combat in cities environment.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
 Chapter	
I. THE SIEGE OF BREST, Part 1 . . . . .	4
The For ress of Brest, 1940 to 1944	
The Invasion, 6 June 1944 to 31 July 1944	
The Breakout, 1 August 1944 to 12 August 1944	
II. THE SIEGE OF BREST, Part 2 . . . . .	25
Ramcke of Brest	
The Forces Gather	
The Attack, 25 August 1944 to 17 September 1944	
The Surrender, 18 and 19 September 1944	
III. OTHER BATTLES . . . . .	45
Considerations	
Summary	
IV. DOCTRINE VS CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	57
Current Army Doctrine	
Present Doctrine Compared	
Summation	
V. A PROPOSED DOCTRINE . . . . .	68
APPENDIX . . . . .	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	109

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is the development of a doctrine for the attack of a built-up area by the ROAD division. This study was undertaken to examine present doctrine in the light of historical studies from combat in built-up areas during World War II.

The scope of this paper is limited to an examination and analysis of essentially conventional operations. The effects of the tactical use of special assault weapons and air delivered troops are explored. Excluded from consideration is the attack of cities using massive nuclear attacks or area saturation by chemicals or biological agents. It is felt that the use of large nuclear weapons on a built-up area will negate the value of the city to the attacker. The use of smaller nuclear weapons would be comparable with the effects of massed artillery in destructive results. For several reasons the use of chemicals and biological agents will not be considered. The art of war will in time give a sophisticated defender protection against agents of all types, therefore the attacker will be faced with an unchanged tactical situation. Against an unsophisticated defender, without agent defense, it will be immaterial as to what manner of maneuver is used as the attacker will have to merely occupy and decontaminate the city.

To develop a logical, objective attack doctrine, both attacker and defender will be assumed to possess the same level of weapons.

The decision as to why a city should be taken will not be explored.

Throughout this paper the words built-up area and city will be used interchangeably as it is used in FM 100-5. FM 100-5 gives this description of a built-up area:

"Built-up areas contain solid masonry or concrete and steel structures modified for defense purposes. They resemble fortified areas, consist primarily of cities containing block-like construction or those areas consisting of large complexes of industrial structures."<sup>1</sup>

This study investigates the problems and techniques of combat in cities by examining in detail the attack and capture of Brest, France, by American forces during World War II. Later the paper will compare the important considerations of Brest with similar experiences from other examples of combat in built-up areas.

The considerations developed will be compared with present doctrine and definite conclusions will be drawn as to the necessity for future discussion and development. The final conclusions will be combined with present doctrine to complete a proposed doctrine for the attack of a built-up area.

This paper is organized into five chapters. The first two chapters will make a detailed examination of the capture of Brest, France, by the American 9th Army. The examination will start with an analysis of the city of Brest and its French and later German fortifications. This will be followed by a day by day study of events from early in June 1944 to the final fall of the city to the American Army on 18 September 1944. From this detailed study the problems and techniques of the Brest operation will be extracted as considerations for an improved doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup>U. S., Department of the Army, FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations - Operations, (Washington, Department of the Army, 1962), pp. 89, 90.

In Chapter III the considerations of Brest will be compared with similar experiences in battles in cities throughout Europe. These experiences will be used to authenticate the considerations of Brest.

Chapter IV will present a summary of all the present written doctrine as found in Field Manuals, Command and General Staff College lesson plans, and instructional material from the Infantry School. This summarized doctrine will be compared with the developed considerations to derive definite conclusions.

The last chapter will discuss the developed considerations and then incorporate them with present doctrine to develop a proposed doctrine for the attack of a built-up area by the ROAD division.

## CHAPTER I

### Section 1 - THE FORTRESS OF BREST

Brest, France, before World War II was the center of French naval activity on the Atlantic Ocean. It had been said that the port had a harbor large enough for the assembled world navies to anchor in sheltered waters. Brest consisted of a naval and a commercial port. The naval port far overshadowed the importance of the commercial port due to its size and facilities. The port's continuous use as a naval base for hundreds of years resulted in the harbor approaches being heavily fortified. Heavy seacoast batteries lined the shore from Le Conquet, on the western tip of Brittany, to the city and continued on to the Crozon and Plougastel Peninsulas. Around the land side of the city were old forts. The most formidable of these forts covered the approaches on the west, or the Recouvrance side of the city. The forts dominated the typical hedgerow country that surrounded Brest.<sup>1</sup> (See Appendix B)

These hedgerows were to play an important part in the defense of Brest, for hedgerows enclosed each plot of arable land, pasture as well as orchard, no matter how small. As the name implies, hedgerows are dense, half earth, half hedge. The wall at the base is a dirt parapet that varies in thickness from one to four or more feet, and in height from three to twelve feet. Growing out of the wall is a

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<sup>1</sup>VIII Corps, "Report of Action Against the Enemy," 30 October 1944.

hedge of hawthorns, brambles, vines and trees, in thickness from one to three feet, and in height from three to fifteen feet. The overall effect was to break the terrain into cell-like walled enclosures.<sup>2</sup> (See Appendix C, Picture 12)

To add even further to the defensive posture of Brest, an ancient city wall was located on both sides of the Penfeld river. In most places the wall was 30 feet high, 15 feet thick and protected by a dry moat.<sup>3</sup> The forts and wall had been Brest's early fortifications, and when the Germans occupied Brest on 20 June 1944, they gained not only an excellent harbor, but a very defensible one.<sup>4</sup> The French Army had prepared no defense of the city due to the rapid advance of German forces and the complete disintegration of the French Army in the latter days of the Battle of France.

After the occupation by the Germans, Brest became a key city in the German submarine effort against England. To protect the vulnerable submarines from Allied planes, extensive construction work was started on massive submarine facilities located in front of the Naval War College. The shelters extended 1,200 feet along the shore and consisted of five large, wet areas, each holding two submarines, and ten smaller dry ones, each holding one submarine. The shelters were constructed of reinforced concrete varying in thickness from three and one-half to six and one-half feet. The facilities were protected against Allied

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Blumenson, United States Army in World War II, Breakout and Pursuit (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1961), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>VIII Corps, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>T. D. Stamps and V. J. Esposito, A Military History of World War II, Operations in the European Theaters (West Point: United States Military Academy, 1953), p. 101.

air attack by antiaircraft weapons ringing the harbor with calibers up to 105mm.<sup>5</sup> When fears of a "Dunkirk type raid" became apparent, the defenses were further strengthened by the addition of shore batteries of 3-inches to 9.4-inches on the cliffs commanding the harbor entrance. (See Appendix C, Picture 5) To make it impossible for Allied ships to enter the harbor, controlled minefields and three sets of nets and booms were placed across the harbor entrance and extended into the channel. There can be no doubt that the Brest complex was second only to Cherbourg in importance to the German war effort in France.

As the war progressed and the Allies moved closer to an invasion of France, serious consideration was given by the Germans to the protection of the harbor as part of the "German Atlantic Wall." The Germans began by constructing new fortifications covering the town's approaches. These fortifications consisted of concrete casemates, pill-boxes, anti-tank ditches, wire barricades, and extensive minefields. The batteries on the Crozon and Plougastel peninsulas not only covered the harbor entrance, but supported the fires laid down in front of the defensive perimeter of the city. All of these improvements reflected the excellent technique of the Germans in defensive warfare.<sup>6</sup> Brest presented a modern and formidable fortress to the attackers from both the sea and land sides.

To man these extensive fortifications, fortress cadre troops were organized into two fortress cadre battalions with a total of 2,000 men formed into seven companies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>VIII Corps, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>VIII Corps, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Rudolf Kogurd, "Brest-343d Infantry Division", (Office of the Chief Historian, European Command, N.D.), p. 7.

Colonel von der Mosel was made the first fortress commander in 1943, and he made the plan for the defense. He based his plan on three points. First, due to the strong harbor defenses, the Allies would have to come from the land side. Second, he reasoned that only the permanent occupation forces would be available at the time of the Allied attack. Third, there would be transportation and materiel shortages that would limit the movement of troops to forward positions.<sup>8</sup>

Colonel von der Mosel then decided to plan his defense on a narrow cordon of forts based on the old French fortifications. (See Appendix B) This plan had one major weakness that was to haunt the Germans again and again as the battle for Brest was fought. The defenses had no depth. They were so narrow that the entire area could be subjected to artillery fire from outside the fortified screen. German reserves could be shifted inside the city with difficulty, while outside the city it was almost impossible to shift them.

As the days passed into 1944, the Germans extended every effort to make the Atlantic Wall impregnable.

General Erwin Rommel, Commander in Chief West, visited Brest in early 1944 and decided that even more extensive positions were needed. This started another wave of panic building. Typical of this period were the German actions on antitank guns. The German 25th Corps Commander, General Wilhelm Fahrenbacker, ordered more antitank guns emplaced in the fortifications. The small caliber weapons were more immediately available and were lavishly emplaced with the scarce concrete. Later, as larger and more effective weapons were issued, the concrete was no longer available. This forced the fortress commander

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.



to place some of his best weapons outside of protected positions where they were susceptible to air strikes and indirect artillery fire.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the extensive fortification work done in Brest, with the exception of the submarine pens, was done by the Todt organization. This was a paramilitary formation of German and foreign laborers both hired and impressed. This type organization dated back to 1938, the time of the construction of the famous West Wall or Siegfried Line.<sup>10</sup> By the summer of 1944 the Todt organization had over 20,000 workers in the Brest area working on 500 projects utilizing 380,000 cubic meters of concrete.<sup>11</sup>

As an important naval base, Brest was the location of not only the submarine fleet, but also the headquarters of Naval Commander Brest, Admiral Kaehler. His area of defense extended from Brest east along the coast to Lorient, Quiberon, and Bell Isle.<sup>12</sup> (See Appendix E) The army command of Brest came under General Fahrenbacher, commanding 25th Corps. On 4 June 1944 German strength in the Brittany peninsula consisted of eight divisions; three infantry, three static, and two airborne. There was a vast difference in the fighting ability of these units. The German regular infantry divisions were 10,000 to 12,500 men in strength, with six battalions organized into either two or three regiments. Each infantry division had combat support similar to American divisions except no armor was usually present. The static

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>10</sup>Blumenson, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup>Wilk, Fahrenbacher, "Brittany from 6 Jun 44 to 10 Jul 45 and Normandy from 12 Jun 44 to 25 Jun 44" (Washington, Office of the Chief of Military History, n.d.), App. 7F.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., App. 9.

divisions had only 10,000 men with a large proportion of fixed weapons, little organic transportation, no reconnaissance elements, and few engineers. The airborne divisions were 16,000 men in strength, all volunteers, and usually organized with three regiments.<sup>13</sup>

Two divisions were in the vicinity of Brest on the day of the invasion and both were to play a part in her defense. The 266th Static Division had its headquarters at Morlaix, some 30 miles northeast of Brest. The 343d Static Division had its headquarters at Landerneau approximately 10 miles northeast of Brest. This latter division, even though located near Brest, was independent of the Brest Command and focused its attention along the coast from west of Morlaix to the Baie de Douarnenez where its units manned coastal fortifications. The distance that it covered was extensive and each unit was dependent on the next unit for reinforcement. This was a perfect example of static defense. All German soldiers knew Rommel's defense doctrine: there must be a "fight to the finish in the coastal positions." They also believed that at the beginning of the invasion the coastal units would have to resign themselves to Allied superiority, however, after the third day the German air force would appear over the endangered area and the Panzer Corps would push the invaders back into the sea.<sup>14</sup>

To protect the extensive area the 343d Static Division had three regiments of three battalions each, four horsedrawn batteries of mixed German and French artillery, two engineer companies, and one signal battalion.<sup>15</sup> Some of the battalions were the Ostbalaillons or East

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<sup>13</sup>Blumenson, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Kogurd, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

Battalions made up of personnel from the Slavic countries and White Russians who had decided to fight for Germany. The officers and NCO's were predominantly German. The East Battalions fighting power was doubtful and the regular German troops had no respect for them.<sup>16</sup> Yet overall morale was good and many of the individual German soldiers were anxious to join in battle with the Allied invasion forces.

## Section 2 - THE INVASION

As the invasion plans were being drawn up, Brest was frequently mentioned. The final OVERLORD plan designated Brittany as the stage for the 3rd U. S. Army's initial operation. For if Brittany and her ports could be captured, one of the basic requirements of OVERLORD would be fulfilled: "a continental port capacity sufficient to support the forces deemed necessary to defeat the Germans."<sup>17</sup> However the Allied commanders were not naive enough to believe that the Germans would leave a superior port ready for their use, so they planned to drive for Quiberon Bay on the west coast of Brittany. This bay area had excellent rail and road networks, hard beaches with a gentle gradient, and best of all, sheltered anchorages to protect Allied shipping from the early fall storms. In addition, it would eliminate complete dependence on the vulnerable Brest to Rennes railroad that linked Brest with the interior of France. This was a railroad the Germans would probably destroy.<sup>18</sup> Yet despite plans for using Quiberon Bay, the Allies were still interested in the possession of Brest. With Brest in Allied hands, it would enable personnel and vehicles to come directly from the United

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>17</sup>Blumenson, p. 346.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

States without having to be off-loaded into shallow draft vessels, and without waiting for the development of the Quiberon Bay complex. Brest also had to be reduced to keep German warships from interfering with Quiberon Bay traffic.<sup>19</sup>

On 6 June 1944, things were quiet in Brittany, and except for limited Allied air activity, remained so for almost a month. The only factor that brought the war to Brest during this period, was the departure from Brittany of division after division enroute to Normandy. By 15 July, there were only four divisions left in Brittany, and one of these was to leave shortly.<sup>20</sup> The 343d Static Division had to send almost all its transportation, bicycles and finally all the horses that didn't have lung disease to the battle front. One new unit did enter the Brittany area late in June, the 2d Parachute Division. This division was to play a major part in the defense of Brest. The 2d Parachute Division was commanded by Major General Hermann Bernhard Ramcke.<sup>21</sup> The parachute division had been sent to Brittany for rest and reorganization with future plans for employment in Normandy. In June 1944, the division consisted of only two regiments, the Second and the Seventh, and one battalion each of engineers and signal.<sup>22</sup> As organized the division was at only thirty-five percent strength.<sup>23</sup>

After almost two months of fighting, the American 8th Corps

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>VIII Corps, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Kogard, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup>Conquer, The Story of Ninth Army (Washington, Infantry Journal Press, 1947), p. 27.

made the big drive to Avranches and turned the corner into Brittany on 31 July 1944. The German defenses in the Cotentin peninsula had crumbled and disintegrated and the Americans controlled the last natural defense line before Brittany.<sup>24</sup> As the full significance of the break-through became apparent, Field Marshal Guenther von Kluge, the new German Commander-in-Chief West, knew that the narrow penetration must be cut, for forces in Brittany were too weak to contain the Americans. Field Marshal Kluge attempted to close the gap knowing well that Hitler refused to allow retreat from Normandy, however Kluge was unsuccessful.<sup>25</sup>

### Section 3 - THE BREAKOUT

In Brittany, General Fahrenbacher was faced with the problem of stemming the American tide with only one understrength parachute division and three static divisions. The remainder had already been committed in Normandy. The German commander was hampered by the fact that air and naval units refused to move from their positions to aid in the defense.<sup>26</sup> During the early hours of 1 August, the 2d Parachute Division was ordered eastward from Brest to stop the American entry into Brittany. Although it started to move, it soon became apparent that the division would be too late to affect developments in Brittany. Threatened with isolation, the 2d Parachute Division fell back toward Brest.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Blumenson, p. 322.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>26</sup>Omar Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 262.

<sup>27</sup>Blumenson, p. 34.

On 31 July 1944, the following verbal order, which was to start one of the greatest exploitations in history, was issued by 8th Corps.

6th Armored Division

Attached 603 TD Bn

773 AAA (AW) Bn

174 FA Bn (155G) Sp

Advance at 010600 B Aug 1944 on Routes B and C to capture Brest.

4th Armored Division

Attached: 2nd Cav. Group

489 AAA (AW) Bn

704 TD Bn (Sp)

969 FA Bn (155H)

Advance in Zone 010600 B August 1944 to capture Rennes and block entrance or exit in Brest peninsula between Rennes and Quiberon.

79 Infantry Division

Attached 445 AAA (AW) Bn

644 TD Bn (Sp)

Co D. 86 Com Bn

709 Tk Bn (M)

Btry A 12 FA Obsn Bn

687 FA Bn (105H)

333 FA Gp (-)

733 FA Bn (155G)

Advance by stages along Routes B & C to assist the 6th Armored Division in capture of Brest.

Task Force "A"

HQ 1st TD

Attached: 15th Cav Group

705 TD Bn (Sp)

Hq 6th TD Group

509 Engr Light Pon Co

159 Engr Combat Battalion

Advance on Brest to secure the railroad bridges on the Brest to Rennes route.<sup>28</sup>

The Commanding General of 8th Corps, Major General Troy Middleton, visualized the attack as a carefully controlled exploitation by two armored divisions followed by the 79th Infantry Division. General Middleton was the type officer who liked to move carefully at his own pace with everything under his control. General Grow, the 6th Armored Division commander, and General Wood, the 4th Armored Division

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<sup>28</sup>"Field Order Number 9", VIII Corps, 1 August 1944.

commander, were students of the Patton school of tactics, and believed in quick, deep penetrations by armor taking advantage of armor's speed, shock action, and mobility. At the very beginning of the attack toward Brest the armored commanders proceeded as ordered by 8th Corps. They selected objectives that allowed the infantry units to stay close behind while the armored units cleared the way. General Middleton was in complete control early on 1 August as the armored divisions started the move forward. (See Appendix A)

At this time the Army Commander, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, decided to pay his old friends and subordinates a visit. The 3d Army Commander started his conversation with General Grow by saying that he (Patton) had wagered General Montgomery five pounds that U. S. Troops would be in Brest "by Saturday night". Putting his hand on Grow's shoulder, Patton said, "take Brest". The thought ran through Grow's mind that here was armor in its real role. This was to be a move of two hundred miles in only five days.<sup>29</sup> In the 4th Armored Division's area the scene was repeated except no wager was mentioned, and the objective was Quiberon Bay.<sup>30</sup>

General Patton did not notify 8th Corps of his actions and even disregarded General Bradley's order to protect 12th Army Group's south flank. The race was on.

By 2 August, not only did General Middleton have little knowledge of what his two armored divisions had been told, but in addition, he had lost contact with them.

The basic problem arose from differences in ideas. General

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<sup>29</sup>Blumenson, p. 369.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

Patton visualized a rapid drive to clear the peninsula and seize the ports.<sup>31</sup> General Middleton, as mentioned, saw the mission as a slow, phased operation, moving across Brittany with protected flanks and measured moves. General Patton's method left nothing between his extended columns and the German Seventh Army. When General Bradley learned of the open flank he moved the 79th Infantry Division to Fougères to protect 12th Army Group's flank.<sup>32</sup> By 2 August, elements of the 6th Armored Division had reached Quédillac and the 4th Armored Division was encircling Rennes.

German units were fleeing in every direction, but as yet the German 25th Corps had no definite knowledge of the American advance. 25th Corps Headquarters was located at Pontivy, in the path of the 6th Armored Division. On the night of 2 August, major German units were located in the following towns: The 266th Static Division at Morlaix and along the north coast, the 343d Static Division at Landerneau and along the west coast, the 265th Static Division at Lorient, and the 2d Parachute Division at Huelgoat and Carhaix.

The next few days were a mass of confusion, conflicting orders, and wrong decisions by both the German and American commanders. The U. S. Army historian, Martin Blumenson, said of this period, "The relative freedom of Brittany was symbolized by the man of the hour, General Patton."<sup>33</sup> One thing was certain, Patton was everywhere. One minute he would fly into the 6th Armored Division headquarters, next time to the 4th Armored Division headquarters. He almost physically

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<sup>31</sup>Bradley, p. 362.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 386.



pushed the divisions forward himself. The American moves were so fast that the French Resistance (FFI) never had the opportunity to fully aid the American advance. However the FFI did seize the high ground north of Vannes in the Quiberon Bay area and the railroad trestle bridges in the Morlaix area.<sup>34</sup>

On 3 August the 6th Armored Division was late starting on the two routes to Brest, then was halted by 8th Corps. The 8th Corps directed the division to turn back and take St. Malo. One combat command was sent on the way to St. Malo while the other two combat commands prepared for the new mission. General Patton arrived and ordered the 6th Armored Division west again after the loss of almost a full day.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile in the south, the 4th Armored Division by-passed Rennes and headed west across Brittany.

The morning of 3 August saw no change from routine at the German 25th Corps headquarters at Pontivy. The corps staff started making plans for combined operations in the Brest fortress. Orders were sent to the 343d Static Division ordering the division to start moving heavy equipment and artillery into Brest. The 343d Static Division found this very difficult as all the division's transportation had been earlier sent to the Normandy front. Later in the day a messenger brought the startling news to the corps that American tanks were only twelve miles from Pontivy. General Fahrenbacker and his staff panicked and fled for Lorient. The communication personnel left in such haste that they neglected to notify any of their units of their departure or the location of the new corps headquarters. For some time

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

German forces in Brittany were without knowledge of the situation.<sup>36</sup>

By the night of 3 August, nothing had been heard of the 25th Corps Headquarters.

On 4 August, the 8th Infantry Division completely encircled Rennes assisted by Combat Command A from the 4th Armored Division. The remainder of the 4th Armored Division fanned out southward almost cutting the Brittany peninsula. In the 6th Armored Division's zone, Combat Command A passed through Pontivy and headed westward. Combat Command B, in the north, was informed by the FFI of the 7th Parachute Regiment at Carhaix and by-passed it. General Grow was so elated that he radioed General Patton that he would be in Brest by 5 August. In the air, heavy bombers made the first intensive strike against Brest killing six Germans and wounding fifteen. The only significant damage was to the submarine pens when 12,000 pound "tall boys" ruptured the roof of the pen in five places.<sup>37</sup>

4 August found the Brest Command still without definite information on the American advance. Colonel von der Mosel, Brest Fortress Commander, started an evacuation of the non-essential French citizens.<sup>38</sup> By evening on 4 August, 25th Corps finally arrived at Lorient and was able to contact all units except those in St. Malo. The 266th Static Division was given permission to leave Morlaix and move into Brest. The 2d Parachute Division still faced the east as a screen. The order concerning the 266th was rescinded during the night

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<sup>36</sup>Kogard, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup>Alix de Carbonniers, d'Assault de Brest, Aout-Septembre 1944 (Brest, Pelebris, 1951), p. 35.

<sup>38</sup>Carbonniers, p. 35.

of 4 August because General Fahrenbacker became concerned that his order to evacuate Morlaix would violate Hitler's, "unconditional holding to the last of even the smallest fortification,"<sup>39</sup> order. Therefore, over the protest of their commander, the 266th Static Division returned to their positions.

5 August found the 6th Armored Division's Combat Command Able (CCA) running into its first strong opposition at Huelgoat. The 2d Parachute Regiment held a strong point with tanks and self-propelled guns. CCA felt the Germans out, then backed away and by-passed to the south continuing toward Brest. This brief engagement slowed the Americans and gave the German command at Brest the first definite news of the American advance. CCA reached Lesneven that night. In the south, the 4th Armored Division linked up with FFI forces at Vannes, thereby cutting the peninsula and separating St. Nazaire from the remainder of Brittany.

German forces were active during the night of 5 August. The 343d Static Division staff and remaining elements of the division arrived in Brest from Landerneau.<sup>40</sup> Major General Josef Rauch of the 343d was the senior general and he assumed command at Brest.<sup>41</sup>

On 6 August, Combat Command B from the 6th Armored Division encountered elements of the 266th Static Division at a roadblock south of Morlaix and by-passed the resistance. Combat Command A by nightfall was between Morlaix and Landivisiau. General Grow received word

<sup>39</sup>Kogard, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>41</sup>Albert Uvillery, Brest au Combat, 1939-1944 (Paris: Pref de M. V. Le Georgin, 1950), p. 205.

from 8th Corps to develop his situation "in front of or in Brest."<sup>42</sup> On the same day, a radio message from the 6th Armored Division was received by General Bradley, that Brest had been secured. He therefore cancelled the heavy bomber attack for that day. The message from the 6th Armored Division was later rescinded, but too late to reschedule the raid.

On the German side 25th Corps gave permission for the 266th to pull back into Brest using the road along the coast. However, the 6th Armored Division cut the road before the 266th Static Infantry Division could get through. The 266th was rerouted to another road inland from Landivisiau to Landerneau to Brest. However, movement had already started toward Lesneven on the coast road and could not be stopped due to a lack of communication. The division commander of the 266th, General Karl Spang, drove right into an American artillery battery position and was among the first to be captured. One unit after another was trapped in column between Combat Commands A and B.<sup>43</sup> However, some few of the 266th Static Infantry Division's units under Lt. Colonel Muller managed to by-pass the 6th Armored Division units and arrived in the city on 7 August.

The picture in the city was one of confusion and defeatism. One unit after another staggered into the city exhausted from the retreat. Many dropped by the side of the road to sleep, without waiting to reach their bivouac area. The spirit of defeat was everywhere and the French population encouraged it by rumors of the sighting of

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<sup>42</sup>Blumenson, p. 379.

<sup>43</sup>Uvillery, p. 205.

American armor near the city.<sup>44</sup> The spirit of defeat even infected higher officers, especially the German Naval Command. A leading French priest, Pere Ricou, requested the German commander to surrender and spare the city, but he was refused.<sup>45</sup>

On 7 August, CCA, 6th Armored Division finally reached Guipavas. General Grow was very disappointed in its progress and CCA was stopped from attacking the city in force because of its late arrival. Earlier General Grow had tried entering the city with a small armored column, but had been stopped.

The city of Brest was close to defenseless on this date. The Germans had stopped CCA's small column, but the defenders were in no condition to stop a determined attack. The 343d Static Division had only weak artillery and even this was not in position to fire.<sup>46</sup>

The American rested after this long push and prepared for an all out attack on 9 August. General Grow attempted a ruse by sending an emissary to ask for the city's surrender. The messenger never reached the senior commander, General Rauch; instead Colonel von der Mosel received the American emissary and refused to surrender.

8 August saw no attempt by the 6th Armored Division to encircle or isolate the city.

The German command was active on 8 August. Field Marshal Guenther von Kluge, ordered General Fahrenbacher, 25th Corps Commander, to take command of Brest personally. However, General Fahrenbacher felt that the Fortress Commander at Brest could take care of his own

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>46</sup>Blumenson, p. 386.

defense. Also, the one land route to Brest from Lorient was already cut by the 4th Armored Division. This left Major General Rauch as Fortress Commander.<sup>47</sup>

During the night of 8 August, the 6th Armored Division received strong probes in the rear by the remaining elements of the 266th Static Division. This forced General Grow to cancel the planned attack on 9 August, and instead, he gave the order to clear the rear area. The last remaining 266th units in the Morlaix area were destroyed or captured on the 9th. On the same day General Ramcke of the 2d Parachute Division withdrew his forces from their exposed position, avoiding the 6th Armored Division, by slipping into Brest from the south over the bridge from the Daoulas peninsula. The paratroopers were given twenty-four hours rest after the withdrawal.<sup>48</sup>

That same day a battalion from the American 8th Infantry Division arrived as an attachment to the 6th Armored Division.

10 and 11 August, were used by the American 6th Armored Division to prepare for an attack to secure terrain for later attacks. The high ground near Guipavas was the division objective. On 12 August, CCA and the attached battalion attacked, but failed to take the ground. It became clear to General Grow that heavy artillery was needed, but it was all committed at St. Malo. During the evening of the 12th, 8th Corps sent word to contain the city with one combat command and to relieve the 4th Armored Division at Lorient and Vannes.<sup>49</sup> CCA and the

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<sup>47</sup>Kogard, p. 36.

<sup>48</sup>Uvillery, p. 206.

<sup>49</sup>Blumenson, p. 385.

attached battalion, about 4,000 troops, were left to contain Brest.<sup>50</sup> CCA established a cordon around the landside of Brest and settled down into a somewhat stable situation beyond observed enemy artillery range.<sup>51</sup> The Germans were elated at the exit of the 6th Armored Division and their morale soared.<sup>52</sup>

#### Section 4 - SUMMARY

In studying the American actions, the drive by the 6th Armored Division over 200 miles of hostile terrain to Brest will always rank as a brilliant action. During the entire period the 6th Armored Division lost only 130 killed, 400 wounded, and 70 missing, while taking 4,000 German prisoners.<sup>53</sup>

Very possibly the 6th Armored Division could have taken Brest if the attack on 7 August had been made with both combat commands in a coordinated effort. But the division didn't for three reasons. They are:

First, when the 6th Armored Division was called back at Dinan by 8th Corps to take St. Malo, the diversion cost them twenty-four hours.

Second, the slow movement of Combat Command A into Brest forced the division to attack in a piecemeal fashion which was unsuccessful.

Third, the attack on the division rear on 8 August by the 266th Static Division cancelled the attack on 9 August, thereby holding the

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>52</sup>Uvillery, p. 206.

<sup>53</sup>Blumenson, p. 385.

Division up for three critical days.<sup>54</sup>

Much of the problem experienced by the 6th Armored Division was due to the command relationship that existed between the armored division commanders, 8th Corps commander, and the 3d Army commander. General Patton had not given Major General Middleton the correct guidance for his mission and General Middleton obviously didn't understand General Patton's concept of the operation. Next, General Patton by-passed all command lines by directing corps units without informing 8th Corps of his actions. Generals Grow, of the 6th Armored Division, and Wood, of the 4th Armored Division, in turn, by-passed 8th Corps and reported directly to Army.

Another difficulty lay in the containment of Brest. The elements of the 6th Armored Division arrived on 6 and 7 August, but no effort was made to encircle the city until 9 August. This allowed the German 2d Parachute Division to enter Brest without opposition.

In addition a deficiency in the coordination with air support existed. Reconnaissance aircraft could have kept 8th Corps informed as to German and American locations and movements throughout the exploitation. The Allied air supremacy was complete, for of the German's 300 aircraft in France, only about 90 bombers and 70 fighters could get off the ground at any one time due to a shortage of spare parts and fuel.<sup>55</sup>

The Germans had difficulty in three areas. First, they suffered from a lack of communication. General Fahrenbacher was so poorly informed that his entire staff was almost captured on 3 August. Second, coordination between air and naval services, and the German Army was

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 34.



non-existent. Not until Hitler stepped in on 13 August, was there anything like a unified command structure. Third, the Germans set up such a poor security screen in front of Brest, that the 6th Armored Division moved unnoticed until it was reported 12 miles outside the city.

Both sides suffered more from command problems than anything else during this period.

In the next chapter it will be shown how the Germans solved this command problem on 13 August with the appointment of General Ramcke as fortress commander. The Americans were to experience difficulties until 5 September, when the new 9th Army took command of the Brest siege.

## CHAPTER II

### Section 1 - RAMCKE OF BREST

On 11 August 1944, a wire from the Fuhrer's Headquarters in Berlin reached the Brest Fortress. This wire was to start a series of events. It named the junior major general, Herman Ramcke, as Brest Fortress Commander relieving Major General Rauch effective 12 August 1944.<sup>1</sup> General Omar N. Bradley in his book, A Soldier's Story, said of General Ramcke:

Major General Herman Ramcke was too aggressive and too fanatical a soldier to sit contentedly in that concrete pile . . . the decision to take Brest was not dictated by any outdated Overlord Plan, but because Ramcke left us no other solution.<sup>2</sup>

Major General Ramcke was the product of thirty-four years experience commanding German troops. He had seen action and success at Crete as a paratroop regimental commander. His tough and aggressive leadership so impressed the German command that he was promoted to major general and given command of the 2d Parachute Division.<sup>3</sup> With the division in Africa and Italy, Ramcke received recognition and praise from Hitler for his division's actions.<sup>4</sup> It was therefore no surprise, when

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Blumenson, U. S. Army in World War II, Breakout and Pursuit (Washington, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1961), p. 386.

<sup>2</sup>Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>VIII Corps "Report of Action Against the Enemy", 30 October 1944, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Albert Uvillery, Brest au Combat, 1939-1944 (Paris, Pref de M. V. Le Beazin, 1950), p. 224.

Hitler learned the aggressive Ramcke was present in Brest, that the paratrooper was made the Fortress Commander. The two other possible choices, Generals Fahrenbacher and Rauch, were eliminated.

Fahrenbacher's premature and disorganized retreat to Lorient and Rauch's reputation as an uninspired leader rendered them unfit.

Upon assuming command General Ramcke made final plans for the defense. He divided the Brest area into two sections split by the Penfeld River. (See Appendix B) The peninsulas of Crozon and Dalouse were placed under the 343d Static Division commander with the majority of the troops being from his division. General Ramcke centered his interest on the city and its surrounding defenses.<sup>5</sup> The city had two reduced paratroop regiments and a few elements of the 266th Infantry Division. However, there were over 12,500 German personnel assigned to the Port of Brest that were no longer being used in their normal duties.<sup>6</sup> The following units were represented:

- 15th Antiaircraft Regiment
- 1161st Army Artillery Battalion
- 803d Naval Antiaircraft Battalion
- 805th Naval Antiaircraft Battalion
- 6th Blockade Breaker Flotiller Band
- 9th Submarine Flotiller
- 11st Naval Combat Company
- Harbor Company Brest
- Harbor Protection Company Brest

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<sup>5</sup>Rudolf Kogard, "Brest - 343d Infantry Division," p. 36. (Office of the Chief Historian, European Command, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup>2d Infantry Division, "Report After Action Against Enemy", 23 September 1944.

Harbor Guard Company

Artillery Arsenal Company

811th Naval Antiaircraft Battalion

Crew of the naval tanker, Sprechern

4th Naval Combat Battalion<sup>7</sup>

From these varied units General Ramcke formed infantry companies and groups of companies. These were called Battle Groups with experienced enlisted men and officers sprinkled among them.

The newly formed units gave the German commander more troops than Colonel von d r Mosel had originally planned for and allowed the Germans to push positions past the old fortifications into the surrounding hedgerow country. The main line of resistance (MLR) was established on a line Plouzane - Guilers - Guipanas.<sup>8</sup> (See Appendix B) The new extended line was based on a system of strong points consisting of antiaircraft positions, old forts, and earthworks. The second line of defense was placed in the outskirts of the city using prominent buildings as strong points.<sup>9</sup> The Germans made maximum use of the extensive network of tunnels in the city. Tunnels were employed as hospitals, headquarters, troop shelters, and were used to facilitate movement of troops from one section of the city to another in comparative safety.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>"German War Diary", Seventh German Army, Vol 4, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>Kogard, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup>2d Infantry Division, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Conquer, The Story of Ninth Army (Washington, Infantry Journal Press, 1947), p. 32.

Section 2 - THE FORCES GATHER

As the Germans were reorganizing for their defense, the American 8th Corps units were engaged in the final stages of the reduction of St. Malo and the preparation for the coming attack on Brest. As early as 10 August, 8th Corps had requested a heavy ammunition accumulation in the initial stockage of 8,700 tons plus maintenance requirements totaling 11,600 tons for the first three days.<sup>11</sup>

Third Army believed that Brest would surrender after a show of force, therefore, they approved only an allocation of 5,000 tons. Even this small amount was not delivered.<sup>12</sup> The Communication Zone Base Section and Third Army could not agree on responsibility for delivery. Due to this basic misunderstanding, ammunition delivery was held up for two weeks. A complete discussion of the many reasons for this "giant tie up" can be found in the book by Roland A. Ruppenthal, Logistical Support of the Armies, Volume I, pages 529 through 535. This was the period, 17 August through 1 September.

The Germans were not inactive, for on 14 August, General Ramcke ordered the evacuation of all non-essentials. By nightfall the city was almost empty of civilians.<sup>13</sup> American heavy bombers made their appearance in large numbers the same day. Two-hundred planes bombed the Brest harbor and Naval College, damaging or sinking a number of ships, the most important being Le Clemencea and Le Gueydon. Further damage

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<sup>11</sup>Roland G. Ruppenthal, Logistical Support of the Armies, Vol. I (Washington, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953), p. 529.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 529-535.

<sup>13</sup>Alex de Carbonnais, L'assault de Brest, Aout-Septembre 1944 (Brest, Pelebris, 1951), p. 35.

was done in the docks area as large fires raced unchecked through the storage sheds.<sup>14</sup> On 15 August, General Rauch and his staff were sent to the Crozon peninsula by General Ramcke to take command of the defense area south of the Elorn river. General Rauch planned to set up a defense line stretching across the Daoulas peninsula, one kilometer east of the town of Plougaster. On the Crozan peninsula the defense line was from the Brest Sued airport to Tar ar Croas. The entire defense employed a strong point system due to the length of the line and the small number of troops available. 343d Headquarters was established at Marget.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile American 8th Corps received its task organization and started to make final plans for the attack on Brest.

#### 8th Corps Task Organization

2d Infantry Division - Major General Walter M. Robertson

8th Infantry Division - Major General Donald A. Strok.

29th Infantry Division - Major General Charles H. Gerhardt.

8th Corps Artillery - Brigadier General John E. McMahon Jr.

(8th Corps artillery consisted of five group headquarters

commanding seventeen artillery battalions and the 34th Field

Artillery Brigade under Brigadier General John F. Uncles.)

Task Force Able (TF"A") - Brigadier General Herbert L. Earnest

(Mission to clear the Crozon peninsula)

Task Force Baker (TF"B") - Brigadier General James Van Fleet

(Consisted of the 38th Regimental Combat Team (RCT), with the mission to clear the Daoulas peninsula.)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Kogard, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup>Conquer, p. 25.

American units were on the move toward forward assembly areas near Brest during the period 14 August through 20 August. The 8th Corps plan called for the 2d Infantry Division to relieve the 6th Armored Division units still encircling Brest on Sunday night, 20 August. The 6th relieved the 4th Armored Division at Lorient. The relief was to be followed by an attack on either 23 or 24 August, depending on the possibility of getting adequate ammunition to the artillery. The attack plan called for a simultaneous assault on the city by three divisions north of the Elorn River and TF"B" against the positions on the Daoulas Peninsula. The divisions from west to east were the 29th, 8th and 2d with the 8th Division making the main attack against the center of the city.<sup>17</sup>

The 8th Infantry Division arrived first closing at Lesneven at 2130 hours on 18 August. Next followed the 2d Infantry Division which closed into its assembly areas near the village of Keramegic on 19 August. The 2d Infantry Division started relieving CC"A" of the 6th Armored Division on the morning of 20 August at Plaudanul and on the high ground northwest of Landernau.<sup>18</sup> The 29th Infantry Division was last to arrive, closing 23 August near the village of Ploudalimeyeau.<sup>19</sup>

As increasing numbers of American troops started to move into positions around Brest, the Germans were forced to rely on night drops

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<sup>17</sup>8th Infantry Division, "Report of Action Against the Enemy" 19 August 1944.

<sup>18</sup>2d Infantry Division, p. 78.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph H. Ewing, 29 Lets' Go (Washington, Infantry Journal Press, 1948), p. 123.

by transports and infrequent submarine arrivals for critical items.<sup>20</sup>

Two of the Luftwaffe's air supply missions miscarried and resulted in showering American troops with quantities of German rocket ammunition, ciphers, codes, and Iron Crosses.<sup>21</sup> The efforts made by the Germans to supply the fortress by air was a complete failure due to the Allied air supremacy.

### Section 3 - THE ATTACK

The time of the attack was set for 1300 hours, 25 August. Final orders called for the first stage to be an attack by the 2d and 8th Infantry Divisions toward the east bank section of the city and the 29th toward the west portion or the Recouvrance section. The planned second stage was to see the 8th Infantry Division pinched out at the edge of the city, leaving the clearing of the city to the 2d Infantry Division and 29th Infantry Division. The pinch out was necessary due to the restricted approach once the city limits were reached.<sup>22</sup>

At 1240 hours, 25 August, a twenty-minute artillery barrage opened the first attack on the city's defenses. Naval gunfire was provided by the British battle cruiser, Warspite, and air by a strike of 150 B-17 Flying Fortresses. This massive display of Allied firepower set the entire center of the city ablaze and drove enemy troops into their dugouts. The 2d Infantry Division pushed out with two regiments abreast, the 9th and the 23d. The division's decisive objective was

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<sup>20</sup>"The Surrendered French Forts on the Biscayne and the English Channel," Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, 6 June 1946, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup>Conquer, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup>Conquer, p. 31.



Hill 105, a mile away. Facing the 2d Infantry Division were some of the best trained German units, the 2d Battalion of the 7th Parachute Regiment and the engineer battalion from the parachute division. In addition these units were supported by 88mm antiaircraft guns manned by the 3d Naval Antiaircraft Brigade. The 2d Infantry Division attacked in battalion column and advanced some 400 to 600 yards before the Germans drove the division to the ground with intense cross fire, mortars and artillery.<sup>23</sup> The column formation was used to feel out the defense and to allow the division to pass units around opposition. However, it permitted the defenders to shift fire and reserves to stop the attack. The attack taught the 2d division a valuable lesson. It was found that not only did the Germans have strong positions, but in addition they had artillery and ample ammunition.

The 8th Infantry Division fared a little better. Like the 2d, they used two regiments abreast, but the regiments each used four battalions forward. The attack carried 1,000 yards before it was halted by heavy artillery fire. The division's two regiments making the attack, the 13th and the 28th, were fighting in the hedgerow country described in the first chapter. The terrain split the attack badly and caused the two regiments a great amount of delay in mounting an attack, and this last push was not coordinated. The 28th Infantry moved at 1630 hours, but it was 1720 hours before the 13th could mount another attack. Total gain for the day was 1,200 yards.<sup>24</sup>

The 29th Infantry Division attacked with two regiments abreast, with battalions in column. The remaining regiment protected the

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<sup>23</sup>2d Infantry Division, p. 82.

<sup>24</sup>8th Infantry Division, "Report of Action Against the Enemy" December 2, 1944, p. 15.

division's right flank. After fighting for twelve hours, both attacking regiments had moved forward only 600 yards.<sup>25</sup>

There can be no doubt that the results of the attack on 25 August were disappointing to 8th Corps. The attack was planned late to allow the infantry divisions to move from rear assembly areas during daylight. Furthermore, to make up for the shortage of artillery ammunition, naval gunfire and heavy bombers were brought in which added to the delay in the time of attack. 8th Corps now fully realized that the capture of Brest was not an overnight's or a week's work. The use of air support was very poor. None of the missions flown were used to support any of the divisions. Available support was used to attack German artillery positions in the city. Later a survey of this action rated the use of heavy bombers throughout the siege as wasted.<sup>26</sup>

26 August to 31 August.-- All three divisions continued their attacks on 26 August. In each zone the results were very disappointing. The units met intense and accurate machinegun and artillery fire from the hedgerows and pill boxes. The advances of the first day had carried the American divisions to the main line of resistance (MLR). Now the fighting became savage with gains measured in yards. The entire advance for the six day period was 800 yards for the 2d Infantry Division, 450 yards for the 8th Infantry Division and 900 yards for the 29th Infantry Division. General Middleton stated that German defense positions were

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<sup>25</sup>29th Infantry Division, "After Action Report, June - Dec 1944", p. 9.

<sup>26</sup>Army Air Force Evaluation Board in the European Theater of Operations, "Effectiveness of Third Phase Tactical Air Operations," 5 May 1944 to 8 May 1945.

perfection in positioning and camouflage.<sup>27</sup> The Germans were masters in the static defense.

A detailed study of this period shows three reasons for the small advances.

First, the American units were advancing against some of the strongest and best emplaced German positions. Second, the Germans at this stage of the siege had enough reserves to counterattack quickly with up to company strength. Third, the American artillery was suffering from an acute shortage of ammunition of all calibers. The American batteries were being not only outgunned, but in addition, were so short of ammunition they couldn't fire counterbattery fire. The attempt made to substitute bomber strikes for artillery had proved unsuccessful.<sup>28</sup>

During this period the manner of attack also aided the Germans' defense. Units would usually attack in column, fight all day, then resupply at night. The same "shot-up" unit would continue the attack the next morning against the same positions. The halt at night allowed the Germans to bring up supplies and replacements, and since the American didn't have enough ammunition to fire interdiction missions, the German could be thorough about the resupply.

The only bright spot during this period was the capture on 30 August 1944, of the Daoulas Peninsula. (See Appendix D) This allowed 8th Corps artillery to fire into the flanks of the German units facing the 2d Infantry Division. It also allowed corps artillery to fire into the harbor area from the rear. The capture permitted the majority of the 38th Infantry Regiment to return to its parent unit, the 2d Infantry

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<sup>27</sup>VIII Corps, "Attack of a Fortified Area," 9 October 1944.

<sup>28</sup>Army Air Force Evaluation Board in the European Theater of Operations.

Division. The Germans lost 3,039 to prisoner of war cages of which the majority were from the 343d.<sup>29</sup>

1 September to 3 September.-- On the first day of September Task Force "B", consisting now of only a battalion of infantry, guarded the Daoulas Peninsula from infiltration. Task Force "A", now consisting of a tank destroyer battalion, a cavalry reconnaissance group and some engineers blocked the forces of General Rauch's 343th Infantry Division on the Croyon Peninsula.

Near Brest the 29th Infantry Division made up a Task Force "S" under Colonel Leroy L. Watson, Assistant Division Commander. TF "S" mission was to clear the remaining Germans from the southwest corner of Brittany.<sup>30</sup>

The Corps' attack started at 1000 hours 1 September in conjunction with an air attack by medium bombers. The 2d Infantry Division, with its main objective Hill 105, gained 800 yards, but failed to take the objective. The 8th Infantry Division was able to move toward its objective, Hill 80, then lost the ground taken to strong German counterattacks. In the 29th Infantry Division's area, two regiments abreast were unable to secure a foot of ground in heavy fighting.

Some progress was made on 2 September, when the 2d Infantry Division took the key Hill 105, and the 8th Division took Hill 80. The capture of these key terrain features forced the Germans to abandon their MLR in the east and fall back 3,000 yards to the secondary defense line.

By 3 September, all 8th Corps was ready to readjust positions

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<sup>29</sup>2d Infantry Division.

<sup>30</sup>29th Infantry Division.

and prepare for the next assault. Only in the 29th Infantry Division area did action continue. General Gerhardt had spent two days attempting frontal day attacks without success. He therefore made the first night attack of the Brest siege. The division objective was Hill 103, less than a thousand meters to the 175th Regiment's front. The regiment made the attack and even carried over the objective to the high ground east of the hill, penetrating the MLR in the 29th Division's zone.<sup>31</sup>

In an appraisal of the entire period, 25 August through 3 September, it must be understood that attack plans were curtailed by the ammunition shortage and that those attacks conducted were simply local affairs. The one night attack attempted by the 29th Division was very successful. The 3d Army Commander, General George S. Patton, was to say of the American units of this period:

"Our ability to fight at night as opposed to moving into position at night for a dawn attack, is pitifully bad. We must learn to execute the attack in the dark."<sup>32</sup>

On 3 September, in anticipation of taking over operations in Brittany and along the river Loire, the new 9th Army commanded by Lieutenant General William H. Simpson, set up headquarters at Mi Foret, just northeast of Rennes.<sup>33</sup> The change of command from 3d Army to 9th Army was long overdue. For by 1 September 1944, 3d Army was racing eastward some 450 miles from Brest. The Brest siege was now out of the

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<sup>31</sup>VIII Corps, "Report of Action Against the Enemy", 30 October 1944, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup>George S. Patton, War As I Knew It (Cambridge, Mass., The Riverside Press, 1947), p. 405.

<sup>33</sup>Conquer, p. 20.

mainstream of 3d Army's interest and little concern was given to 8th Corps' cries for ammunition and gasoline.

In the city of Brest, the German commander ordered the remaining civilians to vacate the city.<sup>34</sup> During the night of 3 September the last German submarine left to end the four years of German U-boat activity.<sup>35</sup>

4 September through 7 September.-- This period might be called the build-up for the final push to capture Brest. The attacks were for limited objectives and without much artillery support. The most important event during the period happened at 0600 hours 4 September, when 8th Corps was detached from 3d Army and attached to 9th Army. 9th Army was given the following mission:

. . . reduction of Brittany peninsula, protect the south front of 12th Army Group along the Loire River as far east as Orleans. Prepare for further action to the east on the right (south) flank of the 3d Army.<sup>36</sup>

On that same day the supply bottleneck was finally broken when direct unloading of ammunition ships across the beaches began to take place at Morlaix. (See Appendix C, Pictures 18 and 19) No longer was it necessary to haul ammunition from dumps on Normandy three hundred miles to Brest. Now corps started receiving 1,000 to 1,500 tons of ammunition per day from ships twenty miles away.<sup>37</sup>

The next day, the 5th, was to see many changes in the city of Brest. Medium and heavy bombers hit Brest on 5 September, in the city's

<sup>34</sup>Carbonniers, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup>Kogard, p. 43.

<sup>36</sup>Conquer, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

heaviest raid. The town was torn apart by the strike. The load was 3,548 five-hundred pound bombs, 719 thousand pounders, and 834 tons of smaller mixed loads. The results were complete devastation to the city and the harbor, however, military installations received little damage. Even those that received near misses by thousand pound bombs were not damaged. The casualties were those few personnel that were caught in the open. This raid, along with others made by medium and heavy bombers, proved of little use in the capture of the city. In most cases the ruins created better defense positions than the original building. The city was badly blocked by rubble, which reduced the effectiveness of the attacker much more than the defender.<sup>38</sup> The last raid was on 6 September when 233 medium bombers hit the city with 439 tons of bombs, again with poor results against military targets. (See Appendix C, Pictures 9, 11)

8 September through 9 September.-- By 8 September, all units had built up a two day supply of ammunition and were ready to continue the attack. It was started with a twenty minute preparation by all divisions and corps artillery. The three divisions jumped off at 1000 hours. The 2d Infantry Division moved forward 1,000 yards to take the last defensive positions before the city. In the north the 8th Infantry Division pushed into the Ponteneyen Barracks against heavy opposition. The 29th Infantry Division took Penfield and moved forward 1,000 yards in the southern zone.<sup>39</sup>

The next day, 9 September, there was success again with the 2d

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<sup>38</sup>Army Air Force Evaluation Board in the European Theater of Operations.

<sup>39</sup>VIII Corps.

Infantry Division gaining the outskirts of the city in the east with an advance of over a mile. The 8th Division moved a mile further forward again against strong opposition. The 29th Infantry Division made little gain in zone, however, their TF "S" captured the Commander of the Conquet Peninsula and he surrendered all German forces remaining on the peninsula.<sup>40</sup>

This period ended the hedgerow fighting. 8th Corps, continuing its fortification fighting, now faced the new problem of combat in the city proper. The new battle was to be a "corporal's war."<sup>41</sup>

10 September through 12 September.-- House to house fighting started in earnest on 10 September when the 2d Infantry Division units moved within 2,000 meters of the center of the city. The 8th Infantry Division accomplished its corps mission by securing the area north of the city wall. (See Appendix C, Pictures 7 and 8) The 8th Division received orders to withdraw from Brest and take up its new mission, the capture of the Crozon Peninsula. In the west, the 29th Infantry Division encountered the first of a series of old forts. When the division reached Fort Montbarey it was unable to capture the fort or to by-pass it. (See Appendix C Picture 4)

The 8th Corps now faced the problem of the obstacle created by the old city wall. Even before the Germans placed antitank weapons and machine gun positions in the wall, it provided a giant bottleneck to travel into the inner-city. The few entrances made it extremely easy to cover with all types of weapons. Standing 25 to 45 feet in height and protected by a moat that was 45 to 60 feet wide and 18 to 45 feet

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<sup>40</sup>Conquer, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup>VIII Corps.



deep, the wall stopped the advance. Corps decided to hold the attack up in the east until artillery and air support could weaken the ramparts and give the infantry some type of opening through which to attack. The 2d Infantry Division used the time to relieve the 8th Division during the night of 11 September and 12 September. The 29th Infantry Division continued its attack with a second night attack starting off at 2400 hours on 10 September. The objective was Fort Montbarey. The night attack was so successful that it carried forward to the next day. The division was able to gain 1200 yards and drive into the Recouvrance sector of Brest. But the old forts still held out and prevented the division from maneuvering against the rest of the city. On 12 September, 8th Corps sent the 141st Royal Armour Corps Squadron to eliminate the forts. Equipped with "crocodile" flame throwing tanks, the squadron offered the 29th Infantry Division Commander the ideal weapon to force the Germans to button-up their weapon ports so that the American infantry could assault the fortification without fear of observed fire. The 116th Infantry trained for a few days with the 141st and was prepared to assault the forts.

This period saw the results of poor intelligence. The 2d Infantry Division was surprised by the strength of the German wall positions and the 29th Infantry Division believed that aerial bombardment would force the old French forts to surrender. Both factors forced a three-day delay, so that 8th Corps could bring forward heavy artillery and furnish the 29th Division some help in taking the old forts.

13 September to 15 September.-- General Middleton now saw a good opportunity to obtain a German surrender. The Germans were being

hit day and night by heavy artillery that was concentrated in the walled city portion of Brest. Feeling that they might surrender, he sent Colonel Reeves, his G-2, with a letter to General Ramcke stating in essence, that the Germans had fulfilled their mission and nothing could be gained by further resistance. (See Appendix F for a copy of the letter.) General Ramcke refused and General Middleton put the word out to, "take the Germans apart."<sup>42</sup>

The 2d Infantry Division started to move forward on the 13th, advancing almost to the key terrain feature, the Brest railroad station. The 29th Division was surprised by a German counterattack and lost the recently captured Fort Montbarey. The division, aided by the 141st Squadron, was able to retake the fort late in the afternoon.<sup>43</sup>

On 14 September the 2d Infantry Division attacked to clear the enemy units east of the old wall while corps and division artillery units started a 24-hour program of harassing fire on the inner-city. The 29th Infantry Division continued its advance by attacking with three regiments abreast gaining ground in an arc of approximately 400 yards to the southeast of Fort Montbarey.

During the same period General Ramcke received two radio messages from Adolf Hitler. The first promoted him to lieutenant general effective 1 September and the second was a message of thanks from Hitler for the job he and his men were doing at Brest.

This period saw extremely tough fighting for both American divisions. The flame thrower tanks proved very successful in their use against fortified positions. The 2d Infantry Division had to fight from

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<sup>42</sup>VIII Corps, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

house to house to clear the defenders in the zone. Direct fire 8-inch and 155mm guns were used very effectively against houses and buildings. It was found necessary to use 155mm and 8-inch weapons, rather than 105mm and the tank destroyer 75mm. Neither of the smaller weapons could destroy the German positions in buildings. The 29th Infantry Division's night attack proved very effective. There was no infiltration tried, although extensive patrolling was conducted during darkness.

15 September through 17 September.-- After firing 8-inch and 155mm artillery with little success, the 2d Infantry Division attempted to breach the old wall. The Germans drove the Americans back with heavy losses. The 29th Infantry Division advanced some 1,000 yards to within 1,500 yards of the west portion of the city wall and the bluffs overlooking the submarine pens. The 5th Ranger Battalion attached to the 29th Division completely cut off Fort du Portzic.

Across the bay the 8th Infantry Division launched its first attack against the elements of the 343d Division holding the neck of the Crozon Peninsula. The 8th easily pushed the 343d Division back to the town of Crozon and prepared to destroy the 343d Division the next day. The first attack left the Germans with only three weak Ostbailions and two batteries of artillery.<sup>44</sup>

The night of 15 September saw the arrival of General Ramcke from Brest by boat with a company and a half of paratroops. General Ramcke elected to defend the best position, the Quelern Peninsula fortifications, and left the remainder of the Crozon Peninsula to General Rauch. General Rauch was very bitter about being pushed out of the best defense area.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Kogard, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

On 16 September the 2d Infantry Division continued harassing fires into the old city and cleared the section in the east area of the wall. The 29th Infantry Division gained ground to the old city wall in the west and drove through to the river in the northwest.

On 17 September the 2d Infantry Division succeeded, after three attempts, to breach the old wall and gain ground in the inner-city. The success was credited to the 1st Battalion of the 38th Infantry at 1830 hours on 17 September.

The 29th Infantry Division advanced over the city wall and now overlooked the submarine pens in the south. Only a small part of the Recouvrance section remained in German hands.

The 8th Division forced the Germans to their last defense positions and prepared for the last major attack.

It became apparent during this period that German morale was low. In many cases entire German units surrendered after being fired on. All spoke of the terrible artillery fire and seemed dazed and confused. Many German hospitals were uncovered and conditions in them were terrible.<sup>46</sup>

The surrender.-- At first light on 18 September, the 2d Infantry Division made its last attack of the Brest operation. The German headquarters was overrun and the recently promoted Von der Mosel surrendered the city at 1500 hours on 18 September. In the 29th Infantry Division's area, the division accepted the surrender of the German forces west of the Penfeld River at 0800 hours, 18 September.

On the Crozon Peninsula fighting on a small scale continued after General Rauch's surrender of the 343d Division elements on the

18th. Lieutenant General Ramcke was captured at Pointe des Caprecins on 19 September and the last Germans were overcome on 20 September.

#### Section 4 - SUMMATION

The operation at Brest lasted twenty-eight days. 8th Corps had used 80,000 troops to move eight miles or approximately one mile every three days. It had been an expensive battle causing 2,314 American casualties. 1,758,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and 218,000 rounds of larger caliber ammunition were fired.<sup>47</sup>

But it was also expensive for the Germans. They lost three divisions, the 2d Parachute, 343d Division and 266th Division. They had 8,000 men wounded and over 1,059 killed. 37,888 Germans were captured including four generals and one admiral.<sup>48</sup>

The Americans found the port and its facilities absolutely useless. What German demolitions hadn't destroyed, American artillery and air had. 620 sunken vessels blocked all approaches and critical points. All the quays were destroyed. The berthing area was filled with rubble and the docks wrecked. (See Appendix C Picture 13)

Conditions were so bad that the port was still not in complete service in 1951 even though Brest had the highest priority for reconstruction funds.<sup>49</sup>

In the next chapter important considerations from the siege of Brest will be discussed and compared with techniques and problems from other attacks on built-up areas.

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<sup>47</sup>Conquer, p. 35.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Conquer, p. 35.

### CHAPTER III

In this chapter the important considerations of the battle for Brest will be discussed and compared with similar experiences from other attacks on built-up areas. This will be accomplished by first studying the problems and techniques of the detailed study in Chapter I and Chapter II, and then comparing it with similar events from other World War II battles in cities.

#### Section 1 - CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration one: The key feature to a successful attack on a city is the encirclement.

In the Brest operation encirclement was not accomplished until 9 August, although the 6th Armored Division arrived in front of the city on 7 August. The failure to accomplish a complete encirclement earlier allowed numerous German units, the 2d Parachute Division being the largest, to move unopposed into the city to aid in its defense. Even the 266th Division, which was destroyed before it could join forces in Brest, would have been able to withdraw into the city successfully if it had not used one of the few roads blocked by the rear echelons of the 6th Armored Division. The failure to make an early encirclement caused most of the difficulties of the Brest siege. An early encirclement is a necessity if with only a light screen of reconnaissance elements. The presence of large elements of the FFI would have aided the early encirclement.

In other battles encirclement played a key role.

Berlin: The 1st White Russian Army Group linked up with the 1st Ukrainian Army Group at Potsdam on 24 April 1945. This action completely encircled Berlin and forced the Germans to fight the Battle of Berlin with only those units present at the time of encirclement, even though they had two large armies in the near vicinity.<sup>1</sup>

Aachen: The Americans were able to take Aachen easily due to the failure in German supply caused by the American encirclement. The following quote concerning the battle for Aachen is by General der Kavallerie Siegfried, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief West.

"After the city (Aachen) was encircled on all sides, it could no longer be held because of supply reasons".<sup>2</sup>

Stalingrad: The Germans were never able to take Stalingrad, and in fact the German siege ended in disaster for the German 6th Army. Major Richard Sawyer in his thesis, "A Doctrine for Defense of a Major Urban Population Center By Division and Larger Units", gave three reasons for the Soviet success at Stalingrad:

1. Correct appraisal of German capabilities and intentions.
2. The failure of the Germans to isolate the city.
3. The ability of the Soviets to provide reinforcements.<sup>3</sup>

The last two reasons relate to the following point.

"Encirclement appears to be the only enemy tactics which

<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Willemer, "The German Defense of Berlin" (Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Army, Europe, 1953), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Richard H. Sawyer, "A Doctrine for Defense of a Major Urban Population Center by Division and Larger Units", (Fort Leavenworth Library. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1964), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

guarantees absolute severance of the ground transportation system."<sup>4</sup> If the Germans had cut off the entire city the Soviets would have been unable to reinforce. Major Sawyer makes two other points in his study. First, the problem of morale caused by encirclement.

"The most serious detriment to morale produced by the defense of a urban population center appears to be the individual isolation caused by encirclement."<sup>5</sup>

Second is the problem of transportation.

"If the enemy achieves permanent encirclement, very little can be done. Aerial re supply in the face of assumed enemy control of the air would be costly and probably ineffective."<sup>6</sup>

A further study of major cities attacked on the ground during World War II disclosed that enemy cities that were encircled fell or surrendered to the attacker. Of those not encircled, Stalingrad held, Smolensk was captured, and Vienna fell, however the Vienna Garrison escaped, using the city of Vienna only as an obstacle.

In summary, encirclement is necessary and should be accomplished at the earliest possible moment. It is the key to the successful capture of a city.

Consideration two: The quick entrance into the city or surprise entrance should always be considered.

At Brest, the 6th Armored Division arrived in front of the city on 7 August and pushed a small force into the city. The force was not aggressive and retreated after the exchange of a few rounds. General

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 129.



Grow intended to wait until he could bring up his entire force before attacking again. However, it was some time before he could remount an attack and by then the Germans had reinforced their position. At the time of his first attack the majority of the German forces in the city were demoralized and ready to surrender. A bold attack by all the forces available to General Grow on 7 August, very likely would have been successful.

In other battles in cities the surprise thrust was sometimes successful.

Stalingrad. "One German expert has said that if only two infantry divisions had been up with the advance columns of tank forces that day, Stalingrad could have been taken almost without bloodshed."<sup>7</sup>

Berlin: "The advance on Berlin ... Such generals as Rommel or Patton would not have lost this opportunity for a surprise thrust. Such a surprise attack from the northeast or from the north would have had a good chance of success."<sup>8</sup>

In Major Sawyer's thesis he stated that at Aachen, Brest, Stalingrad, Smolensk, and Strasbourg, enemy forces in the approach attempted to take their objective with elements available at the time.<sup>9</sup> In three of these five cases Aachen, Smolensk, and Strasbourg, the surprise thrust was successful.

There are two important points not considered by Major Sawyer concerning the failures. At Brest the failure was due to the fact that the thrust was made by only a small part of the combat power available. At Stalingrad the Germans were stopped from capturing the city by a

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<sup>7</sup>Ronald Seth, Stalingrad: Point of Return, (New York, Coward-McCann, Inc., 1959), p. 56.

<sup>8</sup>Willemer, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup>Sawyer, p. 154.

shortage of supplies and reinforcements.<sup>10</sup>

It can be concluded that commanders should be alert to press the attacks if sudden success permits seizure of a built-up area.

Consideration three: Infiltration is a method to be employed in the attack of a built-up area.

The Brest operation is an example of the failure to use the infiltration method of attack. There were many cases where this method would have aided the divisions in obtaining objectives without such a high cost in lives and supplies. One of the few uses of infiltration in Brest was the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry's crossing of the old city wall. The 1st Battalion was able to cross the wall where many other units had failed using conventional tactics.

Battles in other cities show some of the other very successful examples of the infiltration method.

Berlin: "The Russian infantry took every opportunity to infiltrate through back yards, cellar passageways, subway tunnels and sewers ... in this way many of the defense positions were stormed from behind and below".<sup>11</sup>

"The Russians avoided a frontal attack, using infiltration instead, especially at night. Particular trouble was caused by roof top snipers in front of and behind the German lines."<sup>12</sup>

In the battle of Stalingrad both sides used the infiltration method extensively to capture strong positions and to harass enemy rear area units.

The infiltration tactic takes experienced and well trained soldiers to execute properly, and should be stressed at every

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<sup>10</sup>Seth, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup>Willemer, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

opportunity during training. It is a method of attack that should not be overlooked in an attack of a built-up area.

Consideration four: Direct fire artillery has many roles in the attack of a built-up area.

Direct fire artillery was used extensively in the Brest operation. It was found that the 155mm gun and the 8-inch howitzer were best adapted to the direct fire role. They were used to penetrate fortified positions and buildings and enjoyed great success in this mission. On the other hand the 105mm howitzer was found to lack the necessary striking power to destroy concrete reinforced positions. The teamwork that developed between the infantry and the attached artillery is very instructional. The infantry would pin the Germans down and force those inside the fortification or building away from gun ports, while the artillery men manhandled the heavy wheeled artillery piece into firing position. After getting into position, the gun crew had to maintain complete fire supremacy to keep from being destroyed by the guns in the German position. The tank-destroyer 75mm guns were tried in the role of artillery, but due to their lack of punch they were discarded. The present self-propelled 155mm and 8-inch howitzers would be valuable in this direct fire artillery role. The most important consideration in use of direct fire is the necessity for the artillery to be brought up close to the target to obtain maximum terminal velocity and deadly accuracy.<sup>13</sup>

Aachen: In the attack on this city, by the 117th Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division, direct fire artillery was used to pin down

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<sup>13</sup>VIII Corps "Attack of a Fortified Area", 9 October 1944, p. 6.

the Germans while the infantry outflanked the pillboxes.<sup>14</sup> It was found in the Aachen action that the 155mm howitzer was not accurate enough for this mission. The 155mm gun, however could fire from 2000 to 4000 yards away from the target and penetrate six feet of reinforced concrete with three to five rounds. The 8-inch artillery was able to obtain one hit out of five from 8000 yards with excellent penetration. The role of the direct fire artillery was different in Aachen than in Brest. At Brest the artillery was forced to fire at less than 1000 yards due to the nature of the built-up area. At Aachen long range direct fire was possible because of the exposed location of the German pillboxes.

Consideration five: The night attack is an integral part of any attack on a built-up area.

In the Brest operation only one division, the 29th, employed the night attack. In the two attacks attempted, the 29th was successful in not only gaining the initial objectives, but in addition carried the attack on into the next day. The night attacks maintained pressure on the enemy forces and kept the positions from receiving reinforcements or supplies. Many German positions were located on commanding terrain that gave the defenders superior observation and fields of fire. The positions assaulted during daylight extracted a heavy toll of American lives and ammunition. The only explanation for the lack of night attacks during the Brest operation was lack of training.

In other city battles extensive use was made of the night attack by both Russian and German units. The lack of night attacks

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<sup>14</sup>"Infantry Division Attack of Built-up Areas and Fortified Positions", 1965, U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Subject M6430/6, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, p. 16.

was a serious deficiency to American units in World War II.

Consideration six: The use of armored units in the attack of a built-up area.

At Brest, armored units were not used in the city itself. They were used extensively and effectively in the hedgerows surrounding the city. Allied bombing and shelling had so devastated the city that it was difficult for any vehicle to move in the streets. In the surrounding fortified area the 29th Infantry Division found that the British flame-thrower tanks were very useful in the attack of fortified positions. They were used to flame the gun ports thereby driving the German gunners away from their weapons so that the infantry could assault. The 29th Division highly recommended their use. Flame type weapons should be considered in the attack of any fortified area where dangerous fires would not result.

The 9th Army in its after action report stresses the inadvisability of tanks in built-up areas.

"Employment of tanks in an operation of this type (Brest) is not considered advisable. The emplaced AT (anti-tank) guns are reduced rapidly after the destruction of strong points surrounding them. . . . fire of these anti-tank guns prevented the effective use of tanks assisting in the reduction of strong points."<sup>15</sup>

This lesson was not found true in other cities. For example, in Stalingrad the Russians did use tanks very effectively.

"Tanks, firing point blank into enemy gun emplacements, or undermining the buildings themselves with their fire, could be used to great effect in some circumstances."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>VIII Corps, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup>Seth, p. 94.

In Berlin the Russians used a tank-infantry effort to gain objectives.

"The infantry was supported by tanks advancing singly or in group formations and by engineer troops with flame-throwers and demolition equipment."<sup>17</sup>

The last two examples show how tanks and entire armored units can be used to support the infantry effort in a built-up area. Another very important factor that should be considered is the nature of the built-up area in which these actions took place. Brest was an old city with narrow streets and restrictive buildings. Both Berlin and Stalingrad had many wide parks and boulevard areas that allowed more maneuver room for armored vehicles. 9th Army Headquarters felt that the Germans possessed too many anti-tank guns to use tanks effectively in Brest. It is felt that tanks could have been used effectively in Brest with the proper tactics.

Consideration seven: The extensive use of indirect artillery causes problems.

Artillery provided its usual indirect support in Brest, however an unusual problem resulted. The artillery fire caused such widespread destruction, along with the bombing, that the city became defensively stronger. In addition the ruins blocked streets and made American evacuation and resupply extremely difficult. The same was found true in the battles of Berlin and Stalingrad.

"The experiences of Stalingrad and other large cities were confirmed in Berlin . . . the ability of large cities to defend themselves depends not so much on specially prepared installation, but

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<sup>17</sup>Willemer, p. 59.

rather on the extent to which the city is built-up. The greater the destruction by fire and explosion in a city, the more suitable it is for defense."<sup>18</sup>

This fact should be carefully weighed when extensive artillery fire is considered for an attack on a built-up area.

Consideration eight: One of the major problems in the attack of a built-up area is that of suitable formations for attacking forces.

During the Brest action practically every type formation was used. In the early assaults the regiments usually attacked in battalion column. Later they changed to attacking with two battalions up and one in reserve. The ultimate result was that the divisions ended up applying pressure in certain portions of the German defenses while leaving others completely alone. The 29th Infantry Division did this because they constantly rotated battalions out of line for retraining and rarely were at full division strength on the front line. The 8th Infantry Division generally would attack with one battalion per regiment while the remainder of the division maintained fire from their forward positions. The 2d Infantry Division did attack with the mass of its fire power, however at widely separated points thereby allowing the Germans to shift forces along interior lines. By the time the 9th Army took control some very valuable techniques had been developed, and among these was the idea of massing forces while still maintaining pressure along the entire line. The basic idea was to place light pressure against the entire perimeter to prevent shifting of personnel while gaining tactical surprise by massing for the main attack in one sector. The carefully selected sector became the point for a rapidly executed and strongly supported penetration. After the penetration the massed unit

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<sup>18</sup>Willemer, p. 50.

would fan out and reduce enemy positions from the flank and rear.

This method proved very successful for the Germans at Sevastopol in Russia with two penetrations from both north and south meeting in the center of the city.<sup>19</sup> Berlin gave the Russians the chance to attempt the same maneuver, however, they were not as successful as they would not maintain the attack momentum. After initial success they would change to a hesitant and methodical attack procedure, thereby losing much of the advantage gained by the rapid penetration.

Consideration nine: The intelligence effort is one of the most important considerations in the attack of a built-up area.

The intelligence effort was very poorly used during the assault on Brest. On the day of the 6th Armored Division's first attack, 7 August 1944, the division G-2 estimated the Fortress of Brest contained only 3,000 Germans. It actually contained over 15,000. This same underestimation was continued throughout the Brest operation. Additionally, the three divisions had a great amount of trouble determining the location of the German MLR and key fortified positions. Finally the manner of attack was poorly conceived in consideration of the positions faced. Not enough consideration was given to avenues of approach and critical terrain. The strength of the old city wall appeared as a surprise to the 2d Infantry Division although the wall had been in existence for over a hundred years. These many factors show a lack of intelligence appreciation on the part of corps and division staffs'. It is most important that assault methods be based on accurate terrain studies. The entire staff should base their recommendations on a careful pre-attack intelligence study. It is to be noted that time

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<sup>19</sup>Sawyer, p. 153.



spent in reconnaissance, familiarizing, and planning is not gained without a price. For during the period of relative quiet, the defender continues to work on his positions and improve his defense.<sup>20</sup>

## Section 2 - SUMMARY

Nine considerations have been developed from the problems and techniques of Brest. These considerations have been compared with other examples of combat in cities during World War II. In Chapter IV these considerations will be compared with present doctrine to determine those areas that need further development as conclusions.

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<sup>20</sup>"Infantry Division Attack of Built-up Areas and Fortified Positions," p. 12.

## CHAPTER IV

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 1 assembles current army doctrine as presented by Army field manuals (FM), Command and General Staff College lesson plans, and other supplemental material. Section 2 investigates present doctrine and the considerations discussed in Chapter III. Section 3 is the summary.

### Section 1 - CURRENT ARMY DOCTRINE

1. FM 61-100, The Division. This manual is compiled by the Army Combat Development Command Combined Arms Agency at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. It sets forth military doctrine, tactics, and techniques for the employment of the ROAD Division.

Four principles are presented in FM 61-100:

- a. When possible, by-pass built-up areas.
- b. Isolate the built-up area by seizing dominating terrain.
- c. If attack is necessary, select objectives within the built-up area that will divide the enemy defense.
- d. The use of nuclear weapons and intense non-nuclear bombardments must be weighed against the creation of obstacles.

2. FM 31-50, Combat in Fortified and Built-up Areas, is prepared by the U. S. Army Combat Developments Command Infantry Agency, Fort Benning, Georgia. Its purpose is to provide guidance to commanders and staff officers in the fundamental doctrine and tactical principles of

combat in fortified and built-up areas. The material is focused largely on operations below division level.

a. Plans for attack. In planning an attack on a built-up area the plan should include a plan of maneuver and a fire support plan.

Maneuver will be by combined arms teams attacking, if possible, from more than one direction. The plan is divided into three phases: Phase I is the isolation, Phase II consists of the advance to the edge of the built-up area and the seizure of a foothold, Phase III is the advance through the built-up area to clear it of enemy.

b. The following are recommended control measures:

(1) Initial objectives are shallow and the final objectives are the far edges of the built-up area. Phase lines regulate the advance, and zones of action and boundaries are used to control a units' movement. They should run along alleys giving both sides of the street to one unit.

(2) Use of reserves. Reserves are kept somewhat forward and may be used to clear by-passed resistance.

(3) Formations. The formations depend on the width and depth of the zone of action to be cleared.

(4) Frontages. The amount of frontage designated depends on a unit's capability, however as a guide a rifle company's capability is one city block.

(5) Fire support. Smoke can be used to restrict enemy observation. Direct fire artillery, tanks, guided missiles, recoilless weapons, and machineguns are employed to destroy positions and to kill enemy personnel. The 155mm self-propelled and 8-inch self-propelled howitzers are excellent in the direct fire role.

(6) Special equipment. Portable and mechanized flame-throwers, and engineer combat vehicles are among many of the special items of

equipment needed for an attack on a built-up area.

(7) Tanks and armored personnel carriers. Armored personnel carriers are excellent for transferring soldiers across open areas covered by machineguns, small arms, and high explosives. Tanks are necessary protection for the carriers.

3. FM 31-10, Barriers and Denial Operations, is prepared by the U. S. Army Combat Developments Command Combined Arms Agency, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This manual establishes army doctrine for barrier and denial operations in a theater of operations. It is designed for use by army component commanders and their staffs.

This FM gives three uses of obstacles and barriers in the attack of a built-up area:

- a. To isolate the city.
- b. To protect against counterattack.
- c. To strengthen weakly held sectors while attacking in others.

4. FM 6-20-2, Field Artillery Techniques, is prepared by the U. S. Army Artillery and Missile School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The manual is a guide for artillery officers and commanders and staffs of all arms.

This manual discusses the use of artillery in the three phases mentioned in FM 31-50. In Phase I, artillery has its conventional role. In Phase II, artillery may be forced to emplace at night, or along concealed routes. Phase III will find some artillery decentralized, particularly the direct fire elements.

5. FM 17-1, Armor Operations, is prepared by the U. S. Army Combat Developments Command Armor Agency, Fort Knox, Kentucky. This FM sets forth the doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures common to the employment of armor units.

This manual adds data in three areas to the current doctrine for attack of a built-up area.

a. Conduct of the attack. Regardless of the formation employed, the leading elements of the assaulting forces should use a formation that facilitates the delivery of maximum fire on the selected point of penetration. The actual penetration is made on a narrow front by units in column. Several column formations may be employed to make one large penetration. When the built-up area is small or defended lightly, the attacking force should attempt to drive through or into the town as rapidly as possible

b. Fire support. 105mm self-propelled howitzers are effective as direct-fire weapons in support of attacking troops.

c. Plan of attack. The attacking force may be composed of a mechanized infantry heavy direct-assault force and a tank-heavy enveloping force.

6. Others. Many other field manuals were examined concerning materiel on attack of a built-up area. No new materiel was found present.

7. U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Lesson Plan M6430/6 School Year 1965-1966 presents the following amplification to the current doctrine.

a. Estimate of the situation. Great emphasis is placed on the estimate for terrain, civilian population and enemy situation.

b. Isolation. When opposed by a well developed fortified position or a well defended built-up area the commander normally attempts to isolate and contain the area with minimum forces while by-passing it with his main force.

c. Special units. Special support units and special equipment may

be needed for the reduction of a defended built-up area. The following are some of the possible attachments to the ROAD division: an additional towed 155mm howitzer battalion to provide augmentation to the fires normally available in the division artillery, a HAWK antiaircraft unit to provide an area type air defense against low flying aircraft, additional engineer support to accomplish the many missions necessary in the attack of a built-up area.

d. Maneuver. An area which is really one continuous urban one, in itself, may afford little or no opportunity for glamorous, grandiose or spectacular envelopment or penetration by a division.

e. Security. Flank security depends on the advance of adjacent units.

f. Orders. Orders will stress clearing the zone.

g. Formations. Infantry divisions should employ maximum combat strength forward.

## Section 2 - PRESENT DOCTRINE COMPARED

### 1. Topic: Early Encirclement

#### a. Present doctrine.

(1) FM 61-100. This manual makes the point that isolation can be gained by seizing dominating terrain.

(2) FM 31-50. This manual indicates that isolation should take place in Phase I.

(3) The U. S. Army Command and General Staff College. The college lesson plan states that a commander should attempt to isolate a well defended built-up area.

b. Discussion. All of the above mention isolation, and in most instances isolation does mean encirclement or enclosure.

c. Considerations from actual operations. Unit commanders should attempt to enclose a built-up area as soon as it is determined that the city is going to be defended and is impregnable to a quick assault. The timeliness of the encirclement is extremely important. A delay of even a few hours may change the entire status of the city's defensibility. The decision as to the troops needed for the encirclement will rest on the situation and terrain, however as a minimum a reconnaissance screen and a mobile reserve will be required.

The commander's first consideration in the attack of a defended built-up area should be how soon he can encircle the city.

## 2. Topic: The Surprise Thrust

a. Present doctrine. FM 17-1 mentions only that in the case of a lightly defended city the attacker should drive through or into the city. The attacker employing the surprise thrust method does not wait to determine the size or location of the defending force. Quick action is the foremost consideration.

b. Considerations from actual operations. Present doctrine does not mention or emphasize the concept of a surprise or quick thrust. At Brest, a small scale surprise thrust was attempted, and studies of other battles indicate the feasibility of this type action. Most of the current field manuals stress that combat in cities should be avoided. This concept is based on the fact that the capture of a defended city requires large amounts of specialized equipment and results in huge losses of men and materiel to the attacker. Yet historically a mission for a division to capture a city is not an uncommon one.

A city could be regarded in a similar way to an unfordable river, as an obstacle to be taken in a hasty surprise entrance if possible.

This hasty entrance could be accomplished by an air mobile force, airborne unit, or by a deep, fast penetration using conventional ground forces. The key to this method is that it must be executed before the enemy can establish a determined defense.

3. Topic: The Use of the Infiltration Method of Attack

a. Present doctrine. FM 31-50 mentions infiltration as a method of seizing buildings near the line of departure. The remainder of the data did not mention the tactic of infiltration in the sections devoted to combat in cities.

b. Considerations from actual operations.

(1) Infiltration was used very little in Brest. This was due in part to lack of experienced personnel, and second to the stress on patrolling by each of the divisions. American commanders were more interested in finding out where the enemy was and in what strength, than in gaining key buildings by infiltration.

(2) In Stalingrad, Berlin, and other European cities, infiltration was used extensively by both the Germans and Russians. Built-up areas lend themselves to infiltration because of the resulting restricted visibility and multiple exits and entrances. This manner of attack has historically proved itself in city fighting, and should be stressed in combat in cities training and planning.

4. Topic: The Role of Direct-fire Artillery

a. Present doctrine.

(1) FM 6-20-2 states that artillery in the direct-fire role should be self-propelled and equipped with sufficient explosive type ammunition to destroy designated buildings and positions. Aside from this, nothing further is discussed concerning direct-fire techniques.



(2) FM 17-1 explains that both the 105mm self-propelled howitzer and the M-60 tank make excellent weapons in the direct-fire role.

b. Discussion. It is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the medium gun of the M-60 tank. During World War II, the main guns of the tank were not as powerful as the 105mm and therefore no comparison can be made. Present doctrine calls for a tank-infantry effort in cities. The 105mm self-propelled howitzer is not found in the ROAD division.

c. Considerations from actual operations. In the Brest operation tanks were not used in the built-up area. In other battles the tank was used very effectively in a joint tank-infantry team. The 105mm howitzer was used in Brest and was found to lack the power to destroy German positions.

#### 5. Topic: The Night Attack

a. Present doctrine. FM 31-50 discusses the night attack as an important part of an attack on a built-up area.

b. Considerations from actual operation. Historical examples confirm that the night attack is very useful in gaining objectives unavailable in daylight. Its use should always be considered in attacking a built-up area.

#### 6. Topic: Use of Armored Units

a. Present doctrine. FM 17-1 discusses armored units in cities in detail. Armored units become part of the tank-infantry teams mentioned in Paragraph 4a.(2).

b. Considerations from actual operations. In almost every battle studied, tanks were used effectively in built-up areas as part of a

team effort. In each successful case they were well protected by accompanying infantry.

7. Topic: An Important Artillery Consideration - Destruction of Cities

a. Present doctrine. FM 61-100, does mention this consideration briefly. The destruction caused by nuclear weapons and even conventional artillery should be carefully weighed whenever their use is contemplated.

b. Considerations from actual operations. In the Brest operation, mass Allied bombing and extensive artillery fire did more to strengthen the defender's position than to hurt it. Stalingrad was another example. German bombers made heavy raids on the city prior to the Germans entering the city, and killed numerous civilians, however they created ruins more defensible than the original buildings.

8. Topic: The Formation Necessary for a Successful Attack

a. Present doctrine.

(1) FM 31-50 states that the formations used, for an attack on a city, depend on the width and depth of the zone to be cleared and the other factors of METT (Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops available).

(2) FM 17-1 brings out the point that no matter what formation is used, the leading elements should use a formation that facilitates the delivery of maximum fire at the point of penetration. This manual recommends a battalion in column making one penetration, while in an adjacent area another battalion from a second brigade attempts to make a penetration.

(3) The U. S. Army Command and General Staff College emphasizes the principle that infantry divisions should attack with maximum combat strength forward.

b. Discussion. Present doctrine stresses that formations are developed to fit the situation, and are a result of the commander's estimate. From the material studied the preferred solution is to attack with brigades in battalion column in an effort to make multiple penetrations. The penetration is widened by the follow-up battalions.

c. Consideration from actual operations. All of the siege operations studied stressed the point that some pressure must be applied along the entire line to gain tactical surprise and to prevent shifting of enemy forces inside the built-up area. This point was not developed in current doctrine.

#### 9. Topic: The Importance of the Intelligence Effort

a. Present doctrine. Only the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College material makes any specific mention of the required intelligence effort. The college lesson plan places heavy emphasis on the estimate of the situation for terrain, civilian population, and the enemy situation.

b. Considerations from actual operations. The operations studied accented more than the estimate of the situation. Before an attack on a city is planned, a detailed study must be made to determine certain factors for example; the best formations, equipment, and medical evacuation means. Furthermore as the city is changed by burning and destruction, continuous reappraisals must be made.

### Section 3 - SUMMATION

In Section 2 present doctrine was compared with the experiences from combat in cities during World War II. This comparison found five topics which will be explored in greater depth. These topics are:

a. Early encirclement.

- b. The surprise thrust.
- c. The use of the infiltration.
- d. The formations necessary for a successful attack.
- e. The importance of the intelligence effort.

Chapter V will make a detailed examination of each of the topics above. This will be followed by a proposed doctrine for the attack of a built-up area combining present doctrine with the developed conclusions from the topics of considerations listed above.

## CHAPTER V

The previous four chapters have developed five topics of considerations that will be discussed in detail within this chapter. This discussion will be followed by a section devoted to the development of a proposed doctrine for an attack of a built-up area by a ROAD division. The proposed doctrine will incorporate present doctrine and the developed conclusions from Section 1.

### Section 1 - DISCUSSION

#### 1. Early Encirclement.

##### a. Results of encirclement.

The commander's first consideration in the attack of a defended built-up area is encirclement because this alone:

- (1) Prevents enemy units from entering the city either as reinforcements or as units seeking refuge;
- (2) Prevents enemy units from using the city as an obstacle for delay when withdrawing;
- (3) Lowers enemy morale;
- (4) Permits the attacker to have a wider choice of areas for an attack;
- (5) Forces the defender to divide his force over a wider area;
- (6) Prevents additional supplies from entering the city;
- (7) Forces the enemy to sacrifice large numbers of men and materiel to the defense.

b. Manner of encirclement. Encirclement can be accomplished in a number of ways depending on the estimate of the situation and the factors of METT (Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops available). Encirclement may be accomplished as follows:

(1) Physical encirclement by ground units. This is the best method, however it is very expensive in manpower. It can only take place where the attacker has a high numerical advantage in manpower over the defender.

(2) Encirclement by a reconnaissance screen using divisional units or armored cavalry. This method is dependent on a superior communication net and a strong mobile reserve.

(3) Encirclement by severing routes of communication by artillery and air interdiction. This method will prevent the enemy from having complete freedom of action, however it will not stop him from bringing in reinforcements and supplies.

c. The timing of encirclement. Early encirclement is important. The timing of encirclement is critical, however units that are improperly placed or supported can be attacked and defeated piecemeal.

A responsive mobile reserve leaves the commander free to establish road blocks and defensive positions around a built-up area. The sooner the area is encircled the less potential for reinforcement or built-up of personnel, equipment or supplies.

d. Other considerations.

(1) Irregular forces. Friendly guerrillas may be used as a segment of an encircling force. However, they will require augmentation in radios and antitank weapons to perform this mission. They can be more effectively used as a part of a reconnaissance screen around the

city. Another important use of irregular forces would be in an underground effort in the enemy held built-up area.

(2) Terrain obstacles. Impassible terrain such as rivers, large bodies of water, and mountains must either be physically controlled or controlled by fire in order for the built-up area to be considered encircled. The nature of the obstacle is of prime importance. The mere fact that an attacker has a defender surrounded on three sides by troops and on the fourth by a body of water does not mean that this is an accomplished encirclement. Obstacles must be controlled to prevent the defender from reinforcing or resuppling his defense.

2. The Surprise Thrust. The surprise thrust tactic should always be in the mind of the commander when faced with the requirement to capture a city. The ROAD division possesses the capability to capture a substantial built-up area by surprise. Using an airmobile battalion, attached airborne units, or an armored-mechanized task force, the ROAD division can make supported moves of over a hundred kilometers to seize deep objectives.

The very fact that the friendly commander possesses the surprise capability may force the enemy commander back into the city prematurely if he wants to defend it, or force him to abandon the built-up area entirely. Built-up areas are obstacles to any attacker. If a hasty entrance is made and the attack succeeds in capturing the city much of the value of the obstacle will no longer exist. If the surprise thrust fails in its execution the enemy defense will still be damaged as shown in the following:

a. Seizure of even a small portion of the built-up area will speed the capture of the city because it gives the attacker a foothold.

b. The attack will force the enemy to shift forces from other areas to meet the threat, thereby weakening his position in other areas.

c. The presence of friendly troops so near the city will deny the full use of the city's lines of communication to the enemy.

d. The nearness of friendly troops to an allied city may result in a civilian uprising which will aid the attacker.

3. The Use of the Infiltration Method of Attack. The infiltration of units is a necessity in combat in cities. Soldiers and units trained in infiltration tactics will exert a great influence on the speed of capture of a built-up area. Units up to battalion size can use buildings, sewers, tunnels, basements and lightly defended areas to infiltrate into enemy held areas. Infiltrating units may be further aided by periods of restricted visibility and times of confusion such as during air raids and artillery shelling. After a unit has infiltrated successfully it may reassemble to strike as a unit against one or more key objectives or it may remain separated to conduct harassing actions.

Infiltration operations may weaken enemy defenses in the following ways:

a. By using infiltration units can gain objectives unattainable through conventional methods.

b. The use of infiltration will force the enemy to defend strongly along the entire perimeter of the city, thereby denying him any economy of force methods.

c. Infiltration used in conjunction with conventional attacks will force the enemy to split his reserves to combat the infiltrated unit and the attacking forces. It should be noted that there is always a risk of being defeated in detail in this method of attack. Careful



coordination between the infiltrated unit and the conventional one will reduce the chance of the enemy defeating them in detail.

d. Infiltration keeps the enemy units confused and off balance.

e. Infiltrated units when reassembled in key buildings gain the defender's advantages, and are in a position to greatly influence their zone by direct fire and observed artillery fire.

4. The Formation Necessary for a Successful Attack. When preparing to attack a built-up area the decision as to the type of formation to employ becomes an important consideration. Two factors must be considered before adapting a formation. First, the attacking force must apply pressure on the entire enemy perimeter to prevent the enemy from leaving only a weak screen in unthreatened areas as an economy of force measure while massing against the main attack. Second, at the selected points of penetration the attacker must employ maximum firepower and forces forward to rupture the enemy line in multiple penetrations.

After making the penetrations the lead elements should drive for the objectives selected. In some cases a limit of advance line may be used to insure complete clearance of the enemy in the zone of attack.

5. The intelligence effort required for an attack of a built-up area is critical. The commands should receive a thorough intelligence analysis of the area of operation well in advance of the planned attack date. For early rehearsals, location of sites must be accurate, and plans detailed.

The following aspects of the terrain are examined as part of the military analysis of the area:

a. Observation and fields of fire. It will be necessary to have studies, pictures, or intelligence from local civilians indicating the

heights of buildings and the resultant impact of enemy observation. It may be found that certain buildings must be destroyed or constantly smoked to deny the enemy key observation posts. Weather will play a large part in observation. Restrictive visibility may change the entire list of buildings with excellent observation. The intelligence effort should not merely study the higher structures for it may be found that location is more critical than height. The intelligence staff must carefully consider all factors to insure that the developed plan presents a clear, concise study to aid the tactical planners in their deliberations.

Fields of fire are also carefully studied. Certain buildings that can control streets and approach areas by fire must be listed and noted by the commander in his plans.

b. Concealment and cover. The intelligence officer should carefully study city plans to determine the routes that will furnish the commander the greatest opportunity to gain concealment and cover. Due to the possible destruction of certain city features by artillery, the analysis will have to be constantly updated.

c. Obstacles. The entire built-up area is one large obstacle. The sub-areas in the city must be appraised continually to determine if additional obstacles exist. Especially well constructed buildings, lakes, walls and old fortifications exist in many cities. These features may present the commander with additional problems even if the center of the city is gained.

d. Key terrain. Large buildings, high ground, and important intra-city bridges may become key terrain in combat in cities. The intelligence officer should determine those features of the city that play a key role in the defense.

e. Avenues of approach. Streets, alleys, and open park areas become avenues of approach in cities. The conventional doctrine for avenues of approach frontages will seldom apply in cities. Streets that converge on objectives are carefully considered as possible avenues of approach.

It is very important that the intelligence analysis be furnished the commander well in advance. Formations and tactics will be based on the analysis furnished.

## Section 2 - PROPOSED DOCTRINE

This section is a recapitulation of the considerations and doctrine from the previous four chapters and section 1 of this chapter.

The material discussed will be integrated into a proposed doctrine for the attack of a built-up area by a ROAD division.

The proposed doctrine will be presented in four parts. Part 1 will cover the special uses of night attacks or restricted vision attacks, and tactical infiltration. Part 2 will explain some of the immediate considerations that face a commander and his staff when given the mission of seizure of a defended built-up area. Part 3 will cover necessary control measures, and Part 4 will explain the tactics used in the attack of a city.

### Part 1. Special Attack Methods

The basic principles for an attack do not change in the attack of a built-up area. The attacker must still mass at the selected point of penetration, seek surprise, be aggressive and have reserves ready to take advantage of any success. However, the application is different from the normal situation. Two methods of attack should be stressed in combat in cities.

These are:

a. Night attack or restricted-vision attacks. The attacker, by employing night or restricted-vision attacks, can partially overcome two major disadvantages of a daylight attack. These are the excellent observation and prearranged fields of fire usually afforded the defender's position against a daylight attack.

b. Infiltration. Built-up areas lend themselves to tactical infiltration. This technique of movement in cities may be used to:

- (1) Capture key buildings,
- (2) Attack enemy reserves in conjunction with a frontal attack,
- (3) Attack enemy fire support means, command posts, and installations,
- (4) Attack combat service support installations.

c. Summation of changes and additions. Current doctrine places emphasis on night attacks, however the use of infiltration is ignored. The proposed doctrine stresses that special teams be formed and trained to be used in combat in cities when required. The advanced unit training cycle should not only include combat in cities, but in addition should inject the infiltration method of attack as one of the best ways to gain key buildings in combat in cities.

## Part 2. Immediate Considerations

Upon notification that the division's mission is to capture a built-up area, the commander and his staff will have a number of factors to take into immediate consideration. Among these will be:

a. The possible seizure of the city by a surprise attack using the division airmobile capability, airborne attachment, or a deep penetration using conventional ground attack.

b. The plans necessary to insure early encirclement of the city by one or all of the following:

(1) Interdiction of the communication routes by artillery and air.

(2) Seizure of dominating terrain controlling the routes of communication.

(3) Physically placing units in circle around the city. This last method is by far the best, however it requires a larger size force.

c. Requesting special equipment in case the surprise thrust is unsuccessful. From historical studies and present doctrine the following equipment should be included:

(1) Portable flame throwers. Request enough flame throwers for eight per rifle company.

(2) Flame thrower tanks. Flame tanks should be furnished on the basis of one per assaulting rifle company.

(3) Combat engineer vehicles (CEV). These vehicles will furnish the necessary direct fire weapon needed for combat in cities. The requirement will be based on the fortifications present in a built-up area. However, each assaulting company should have at least one CEV.

(4) Additional radios and wire. Built-up areas will restrict radio range and require more radios than are presently issued. Extended wire lines will be necessary to maintain responsive command.

(5) Direct-fire artillery. The large caliber weapons, 8-inch and 155mm, are required to reduce fortified buildings. These weapons should be self-propelled. The requirement will be based on the structure of the buildings and fortifications. The direct-fire artillery weapons may be attached down to company and should arrive early enough

to allow time for rehearsals with the infantry. The attachment or placing of self-propelled weapons on such a low level is unusual, however it must be realized that teamwork is of the utmost importance in the attack of a build-up area. A small unit commander will be completely in charge of the clearing of a building or a series of buildings. He will have to have positive control of all elements to accomplish the mission. He will not have the opportunity to call back to the artillery battery to request permission to move the weapon, or will the battery commander know enough of the local situation to make any type of logical decision. If the buildings are of the nature to be vulnerable to tank fire, then tanks would be more suitable as a direct-fire weapon.

d. Analysis of the area of operations. Particular emphasis is placed on obtaining an early, complete and accurate study of the built-up area. Attack plans will be based on the expected enemy resistance and positions, and the plans should be worked out and rehearsed on the lowest level prior to the division's entrance into the city. In the analysis the following unusual items should be considered:

(1) Buildings that offer the defender or attacker special advantages.

(2) Streets and open areas that can be easily converted into direct fire lanes by well placed anti-tank and automatic weapons.

(3) Underground approaches that allow the attacker or defender concealed and covered routes of movement.

(4) Large underground areas that offer the defender protected storage and shelter facilities.

e. Summation of changes and additions. The proposed doctrine adds some considerations to the current doctrine. The first is the use of

the surprise attack using the equipment and personnel available to the ROAD division commander. The second is the requirement to have flame throwing tanks as an aid to the attack of enemy fortified positions. The heavy armor protection is required to protect the flame throwing tank crew until the flames can force the enemy gunners away from their protected gunports. A vehicle having light armor protection, such as a personnel carrier M-113, will not be able to approach enemy positions because of its vulnerability to small arms. The last addition to current doctrine is the attachment of self-propelled artillery down to the company level for the reasons stated in paragraph c (5).

### Part 3. Control Measures

As in any attack control is important. The control measures discussed below are the same, however their use is different as shown:

a. Objectives. Division objectives should be on the far side of the enemy built-up area. Brigades and battalions will select objectives in the city that split the enemy defense by seizing key terrain or buildings.

b. Boundaries. Division will select zones of action large enough to allow brigades sufficient avenues of approach to accommodate them. Boundaries should be alleys to allow the assaulting units to use the main arteries as avenues of approach.

c. Limit of advance. In selecting objectives, the division may find that clearly defined objectives are not present. However, a definite line such as a river, road, or rail line is located so that it furnishes a clear objective line. This can be considered a limit of advance. Either a limit of advance or objectives may be used depending on the situation and the terrain.

d. Phase lines. Phase lines may be used in greater number than in other situations. Phase lines are used to control movement of advancing units and should be on an easily recognized terrain feature such as a prominent road, railroad, or stream running perpendicular to the axis of advance.

e. Contact and check points. Security between advancing columns depends on the advance of the adjacent units. Definite points of contact must be established well in advance to keep units from being encircled and destroyed by an aggressive enemy.

f. Summation of changes and additions. The majority of the control measures are in current doctrine. The one addition is in the use of limit of advance instead of objectives. Some of the cases where limit of advance may be more applicable than objectives are as follows:

- (1) When objectives are not easily recognizable from the ground.
- (2) When the city has been destroyed to the point that definite objectives are impossible to find.
- (3) When an obstacle forms a natural line of demarcation.

#### Part 4. Tactics Used

a. Frontages. As a guide a rifle company can cover one city block. It is not necessary that each city block frontage be covered by a company, but those avenues of approach in contention must be covered.

b. Formations. When preparing to make a penetration, units should mass personnel and fire support means. This does not mean that other enemy areas will be overlooked. Instead pressure in the limited objective attacks will strike the entire enemy defensive line, while in the selected areas assault units will attempt to make multiple penetrations. Upon making penetrations follow-up units will assault adjacent areas



from the rear and flanks to widen the penetrated area. Follow-up units will be required to clear the enemy troops in zone as they advance.

c. Exploitation. In the event the enemy resistance should disintegrate in a particular section of the built-up area as the result of friendly pressure, an immediate attempt must be made to conduct a pursuit and exploitation to key terrain.

d. Reserves. The majority of the combat power of the attacking division should be well forward. A small reserve should follow the attacking brigades closely, and if possible be supplied with armored personnel carriers to give the reserve protected mobility.

e. Assault teams. After the analysis of the built-up area has been carefully considered, assault teams should be formed from infantry, armor, artillery and special equipment elements. The organizational mix of these teams will depend on the forecasted requirements necessitated by the characteristics of the built-up area. In all cases the teams should have a large caliber weapon with a direct fire capability, flame throwers, and protecting infantry. The use of these assault teams will be determined from the area analysis. Special rehearsals, with all elements present, should be conducted prior to the attack into the city.

f. Use of Engineers. The engineers will be used extensively in the built-up area as members of the assault teams, special clearing parties, demolition teams, or in other required roles additional attached engineer battalions from corps will be required in attacking units.

g. Logistical Problems. Two problems will be foremost in the logistical field. These are the evacuation of wounded, and resupply of ammunition. An increase in litter bearers will be required and

additional evacuation vehicles will be needed. Some consideration should be given to helicopter evacuation pickups from preselected roof tops and open park areas.

Ammunition resupply should be carefully planned. Combat in cities consumes large quantities of ammunition while presenting many problems in getting ammunition to forward elements. Armored personnel carriers or tanks may be required to keep the forward assault teams supplied.

h. Fire Support Plan. The fire support plan should not overlook interdiction. The defender's forward positions should be separated from the reserves and rear area by a curtain of fire. The isolation of the forward defense area should be high on the priority list of the artillery and close air support.

i. Civilian Control Measures. It is preferred that civilians be evacuated from a city before it is assaulted either by agreement with the enemy or by the use of psychological operations. Collection points will have to be established in surrounding areas to care for the civilians while the fighting is going on. In the case where civilians are not evacuated, it will be necessary to move them to collection points as they are uncovered.

In both cases they can not be allowed to hinder military operations. In the case where they are not evacuated ahead of time the attacking force will be faced with the added problem of large numbers of wounded civilians to evacuate and temporarily care for.

j. Summation of changes and additions. Two additional areas were incorporated into Part 4. The first is formations used in the attack of a built-up area. This change stressed the importance of continuous pressure along the entire front to prevent shifting of forces to the threatened area. A further change was in the assault team area. Assault

teams should be combined arms teams using whatever weapon systems are best adapted to the enemy positions and terrain. In some cases this may mean the attachment of self-propelled artillery down to the platoon level.

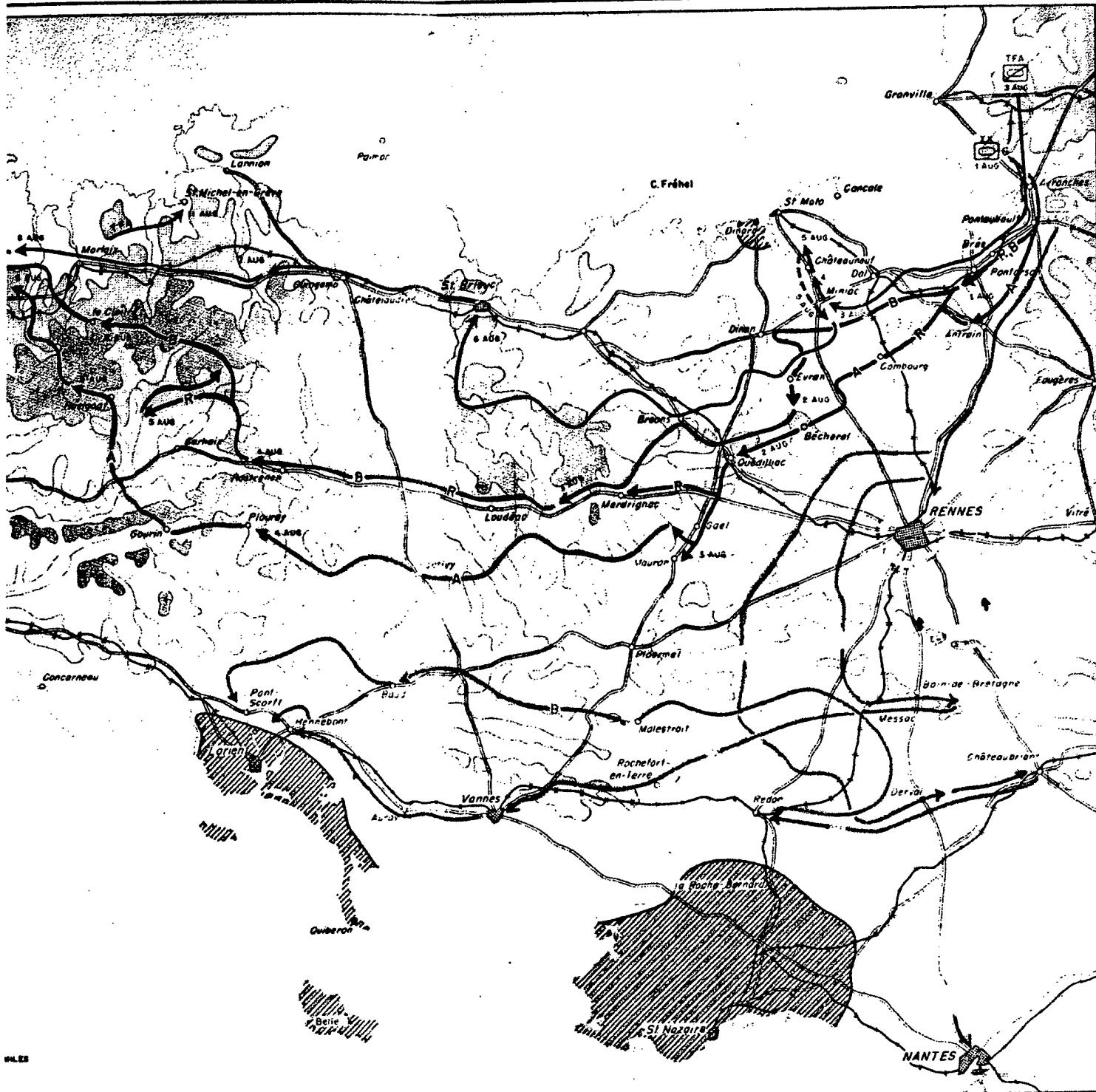
### Section 3 - SUMMARY

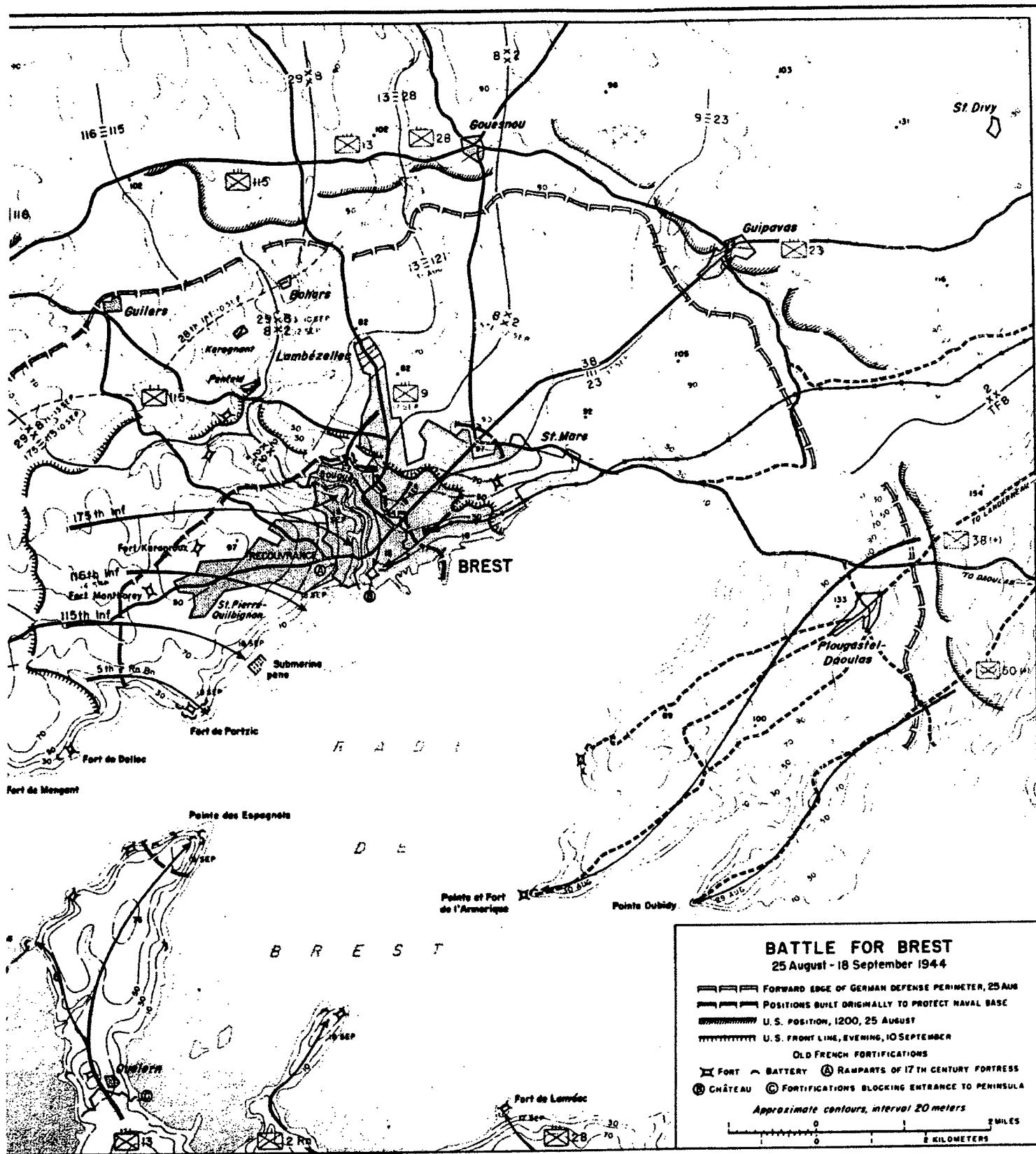
This chapter has presented a combined study of present doctrine and new considerations in order to present a proposed doctrine for combat in built-up areas. The ROAD division can operate in built-up area conditions. However, it is necessary to stress the importance of careful planning and training prior to commitment against a defended city. In summation the attacker must be quick and aggressive to perceive the defenders weakness. If at all possible the attacker should attempt a surprise thrust into the city using the great flexibility inherent in the ROAD division. If the surprise thrust is unsuccessful or not attempted, encirclement should be launched early to isolate the defender. When clearance of a city is required, the attacker should carefully plan his attack using all the intelligence means available to formulate a logical plan. Once the built-up area is entered, the attacker should vary his manner of attack from infiltration to mass assault on a narrow front to keep the defender off balance and confused. Principles for the attack by the division will probably not change. Yet, techniques in the application of these principles will change to meet the environment of combat in a built-up area.

Appendix A

(Map IX from Martin Blumenson's U. S. Army in World War II, Breakout  
and Pursuit)

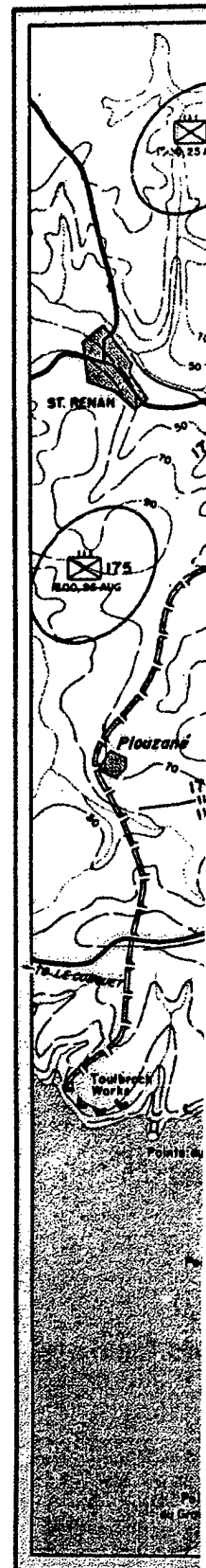
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Appendix B

o XV (From Martin Blumenson's U. S. Army in World War II, Breakout  
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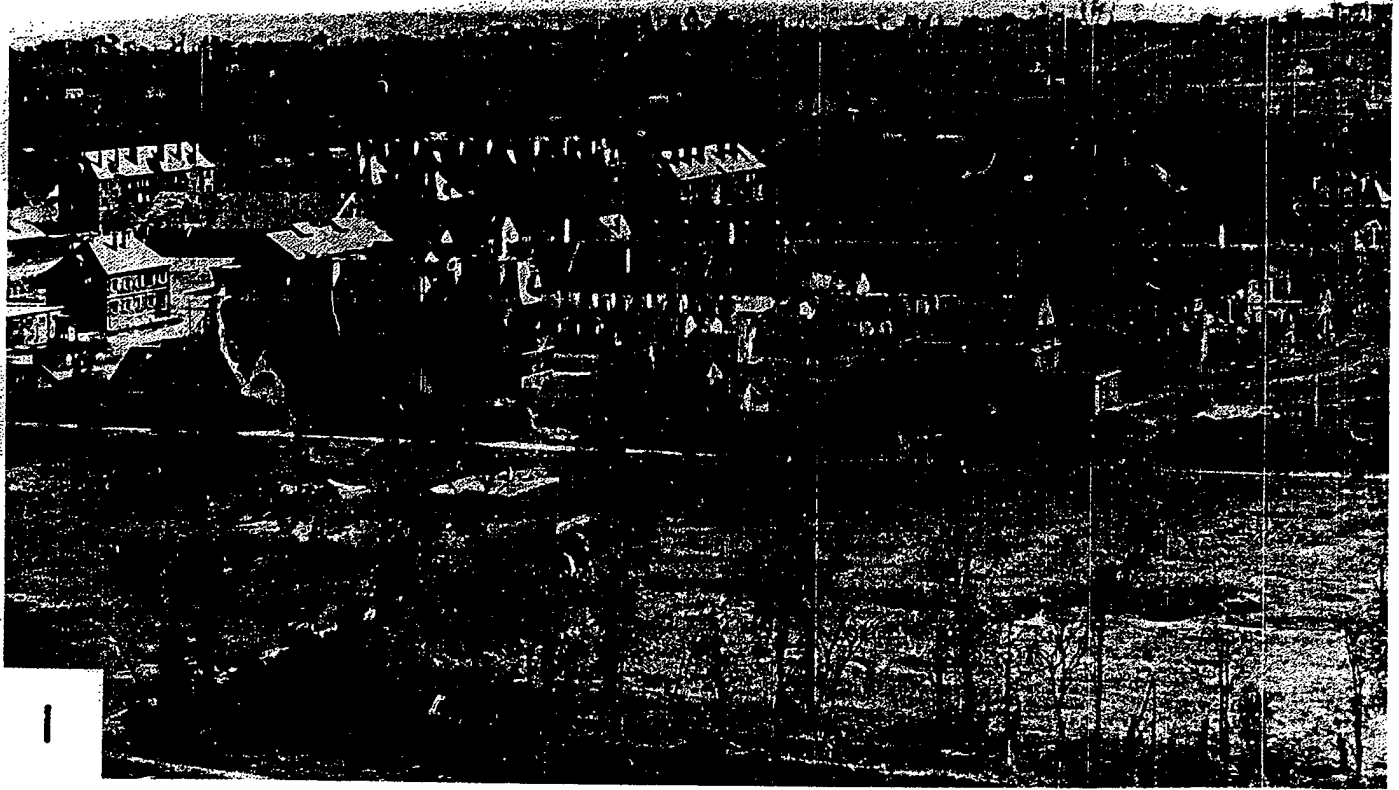


## **Appendix C**

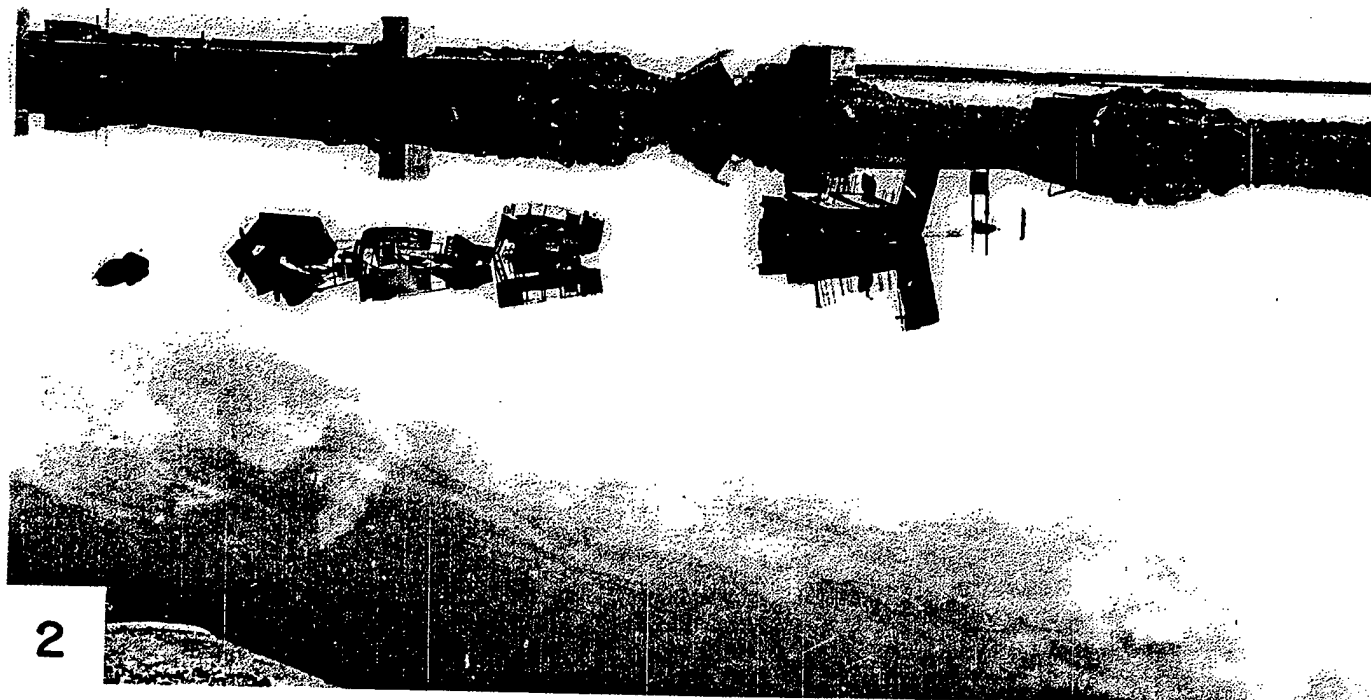
**Pictures taken after the Capture of Brest**

**(Captions and pictures keyed to Appendix D or E locations)**





Pontenezen Barracks. This area was taken by the 8th Infantry Division, 8 September 1944. 8th Corps Artillery set the old French barracks on fire early in the siege.



Brest Harbor. One of the 600 ships sunk by the Germans to block the harbor to Allied use. In addition the jetty had been dynamited at regular intervals by the Germans.

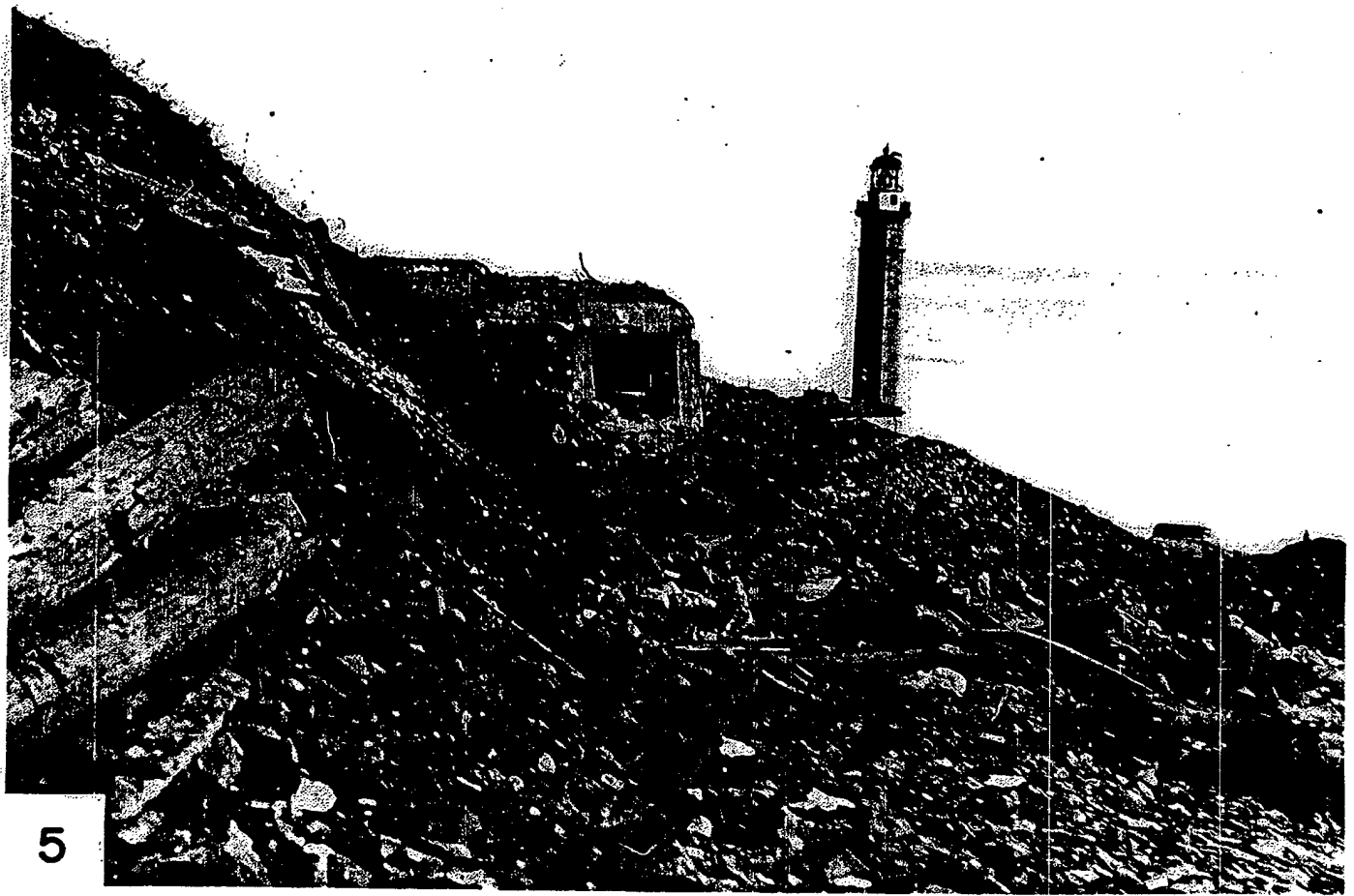


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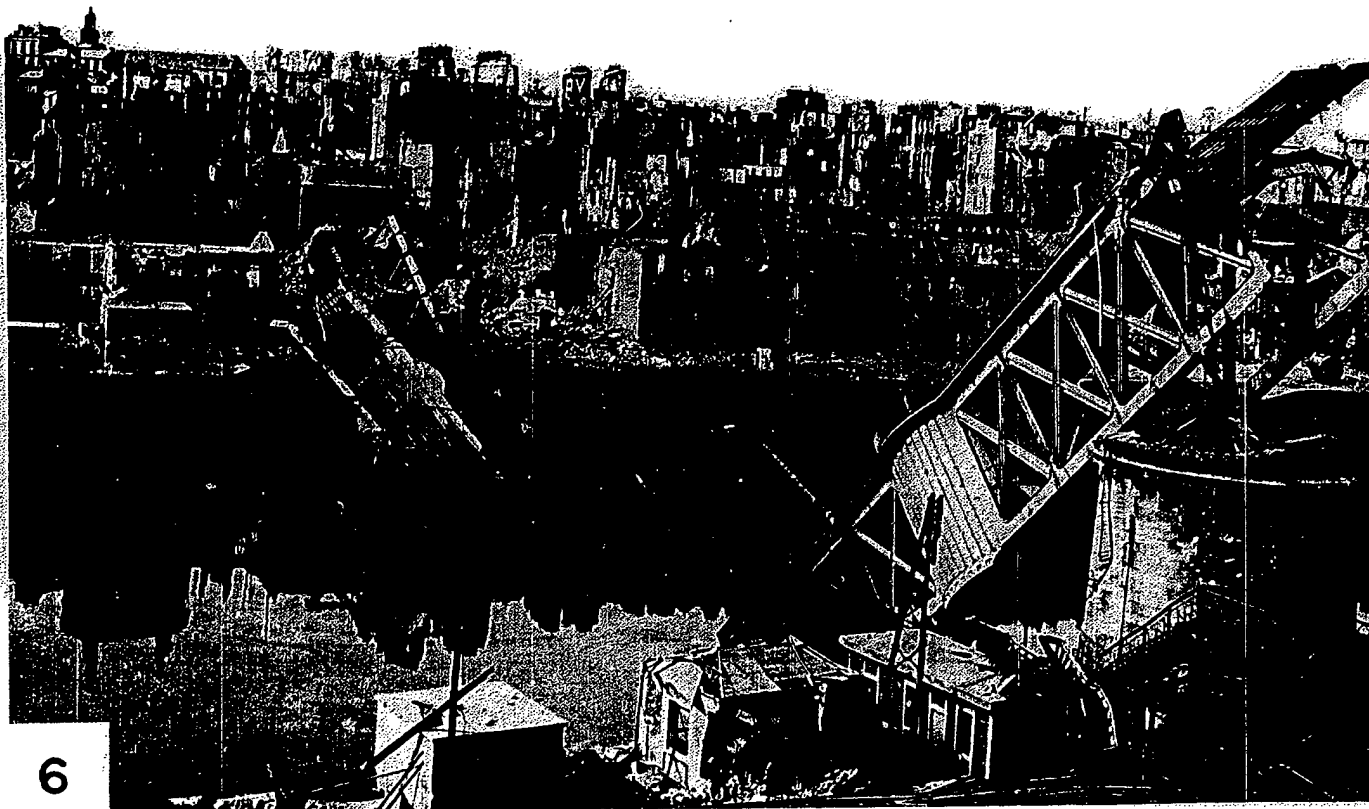
Fort Keranroux. This old Vauban fort was used by the Germans in their stronghold defense. It was taken by the 29th Division using extensive artillery fire, air bombardment and the British flame-throwing tanks. Vauban forts are discussed in detail in the April 66 issue of the Military Review, U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, p. 77.



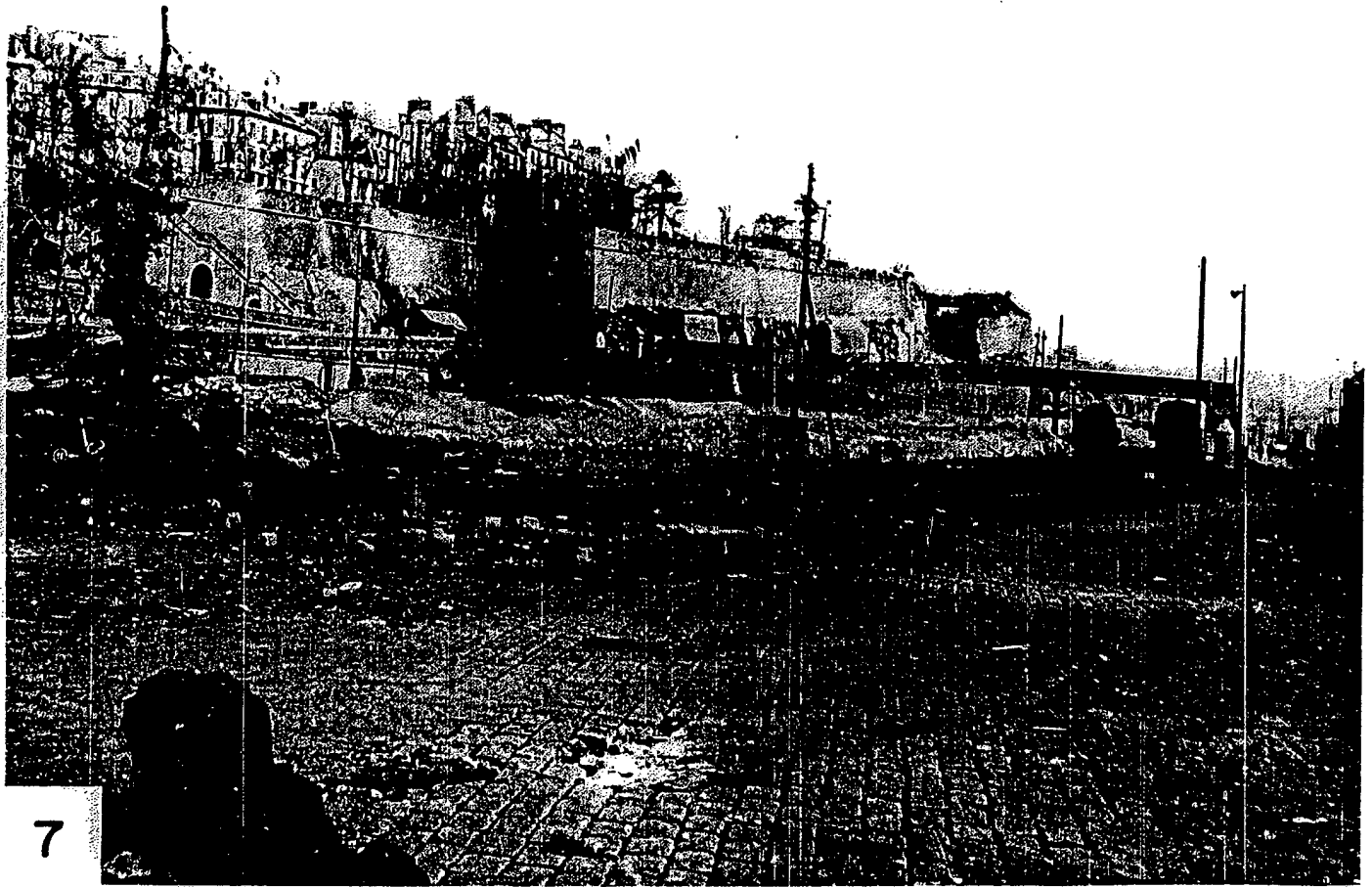
Fort Montbarey. Taken, lost, then retaken in hard fighting by the 29th Infantry Division. Fort Montbarey saw the first use of the British flame-throwing tank in conjunction with an American assault.



A Portion of the Defenses of Fort Du Portzic. This 150mm Gun in casemate could only fire seaward. The fort was taken by the 5th Ranger Battalion.



Turn table bridge across the Penfeld River. This bridge was destroyed by the Germans to block the river.



City wall facing the water front. Notice how the wall covered the approaches to the inter-city.



Entrance through the wall at the West Gate. These narrow entrances made the inter-city extremely defensible.



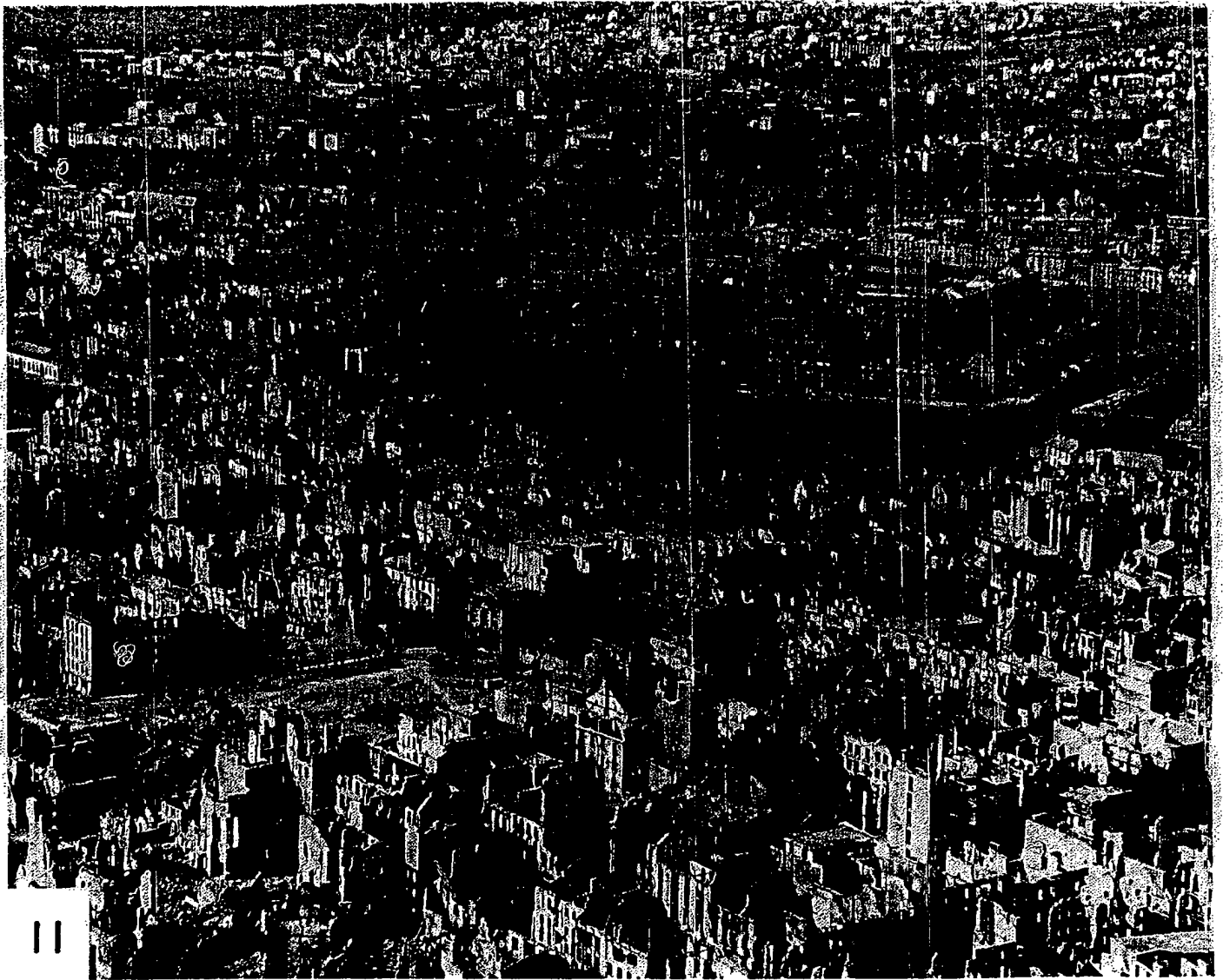


Chateau at Brest from the east side. Last stronghold held by the Germans in Brest.

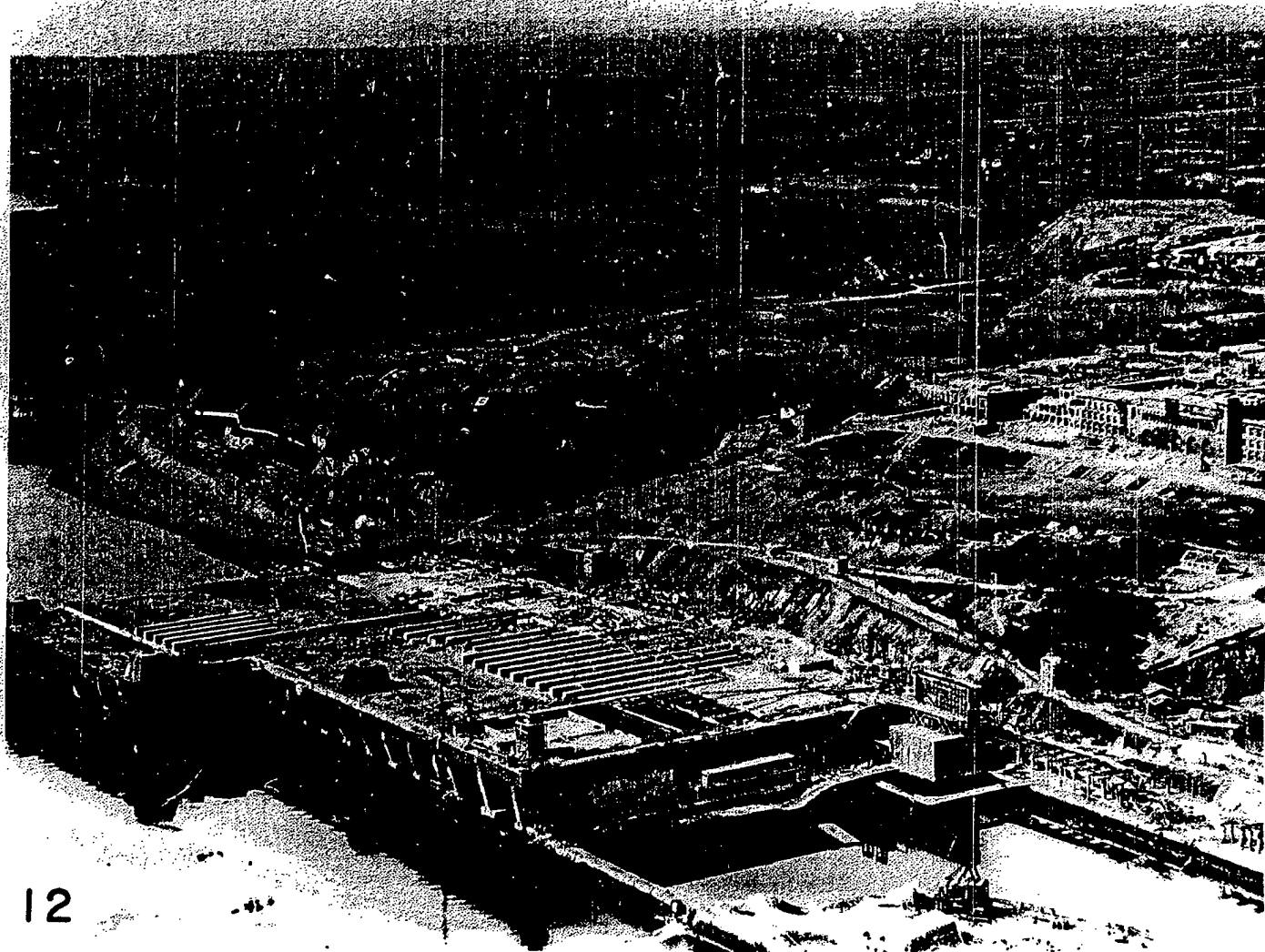


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Brest waterfront from the Daoulas Peninsula. From these positions 8th Corps artillery fired into the rear of the German defenses.



This picture taken from the air shows Brest in the foreground with Recouvance in the background.



German submarine pens with the French Naval College on the right. In the background stretching to the left top are the hedgerows faced by the 29th Division.



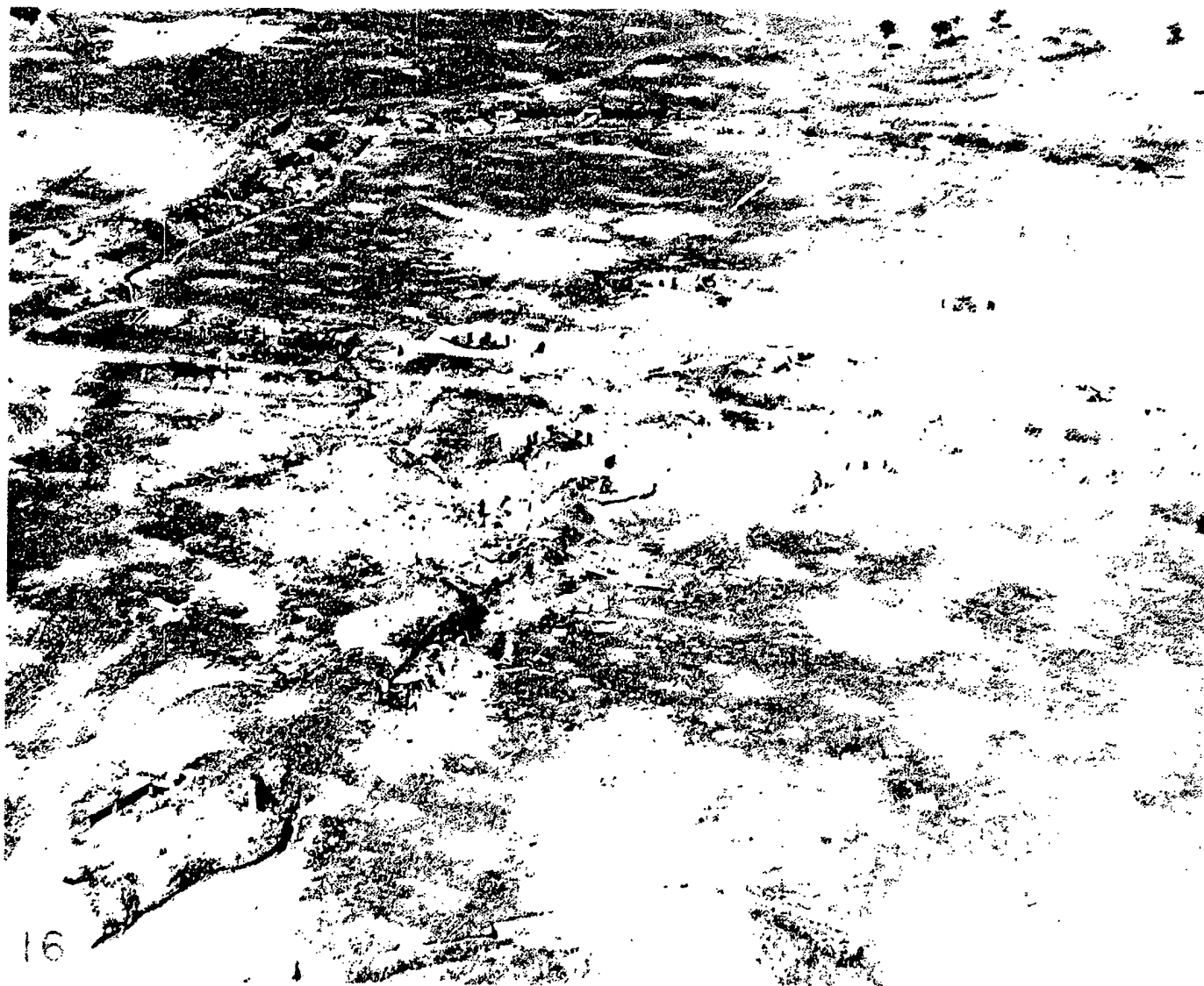
The Chateau from the Penfeld River side. Notice the large number of blockships resting on the river bottom.



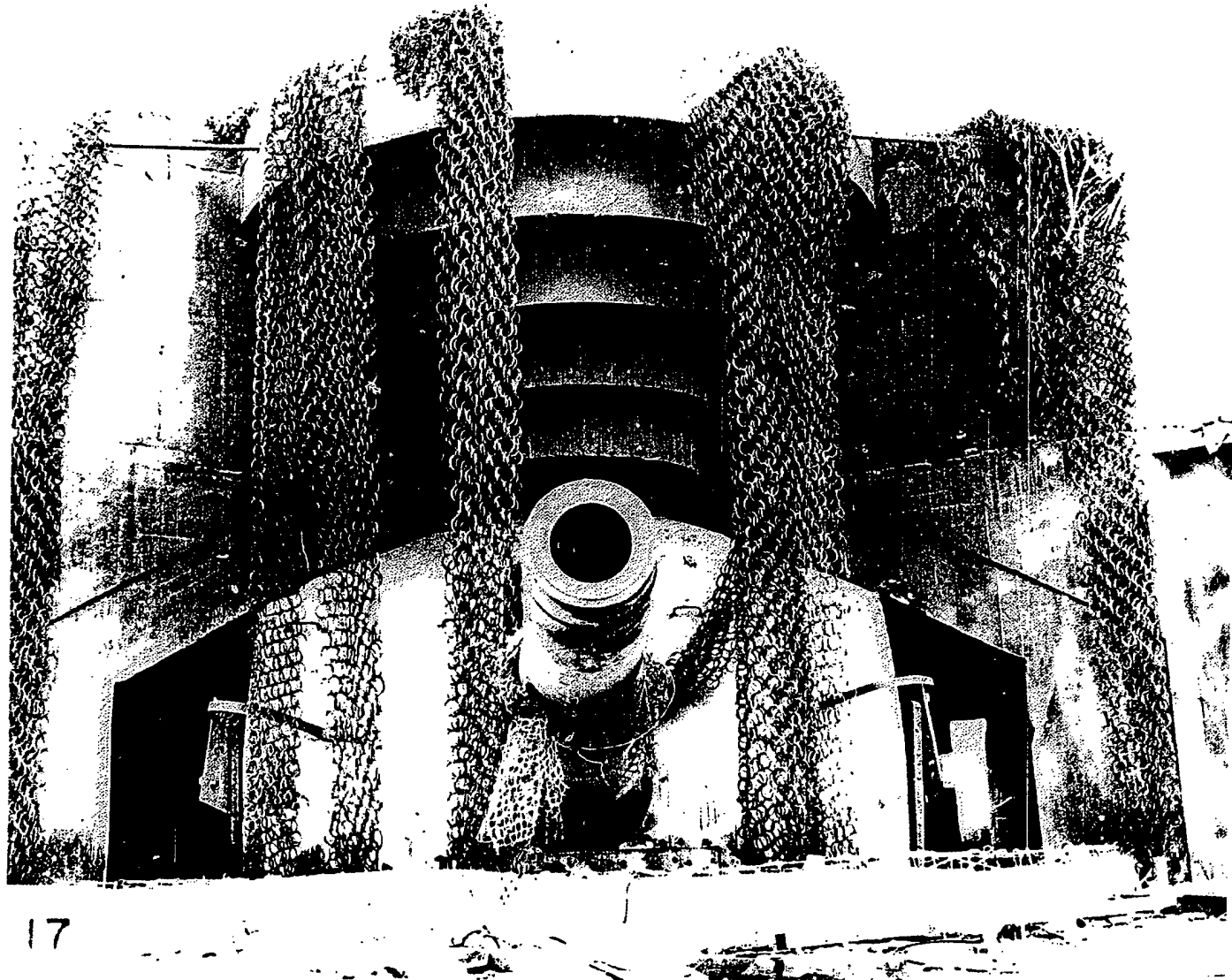
Section of the city wall faced by the 2d Infantry Division. This wall held the division up for four days. 8th Corps used 155mm, 75mm, and 240mm artillery in the attempt to breach the wall. The 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry finally succeeded in breaching the wall in early evening of 17 September.



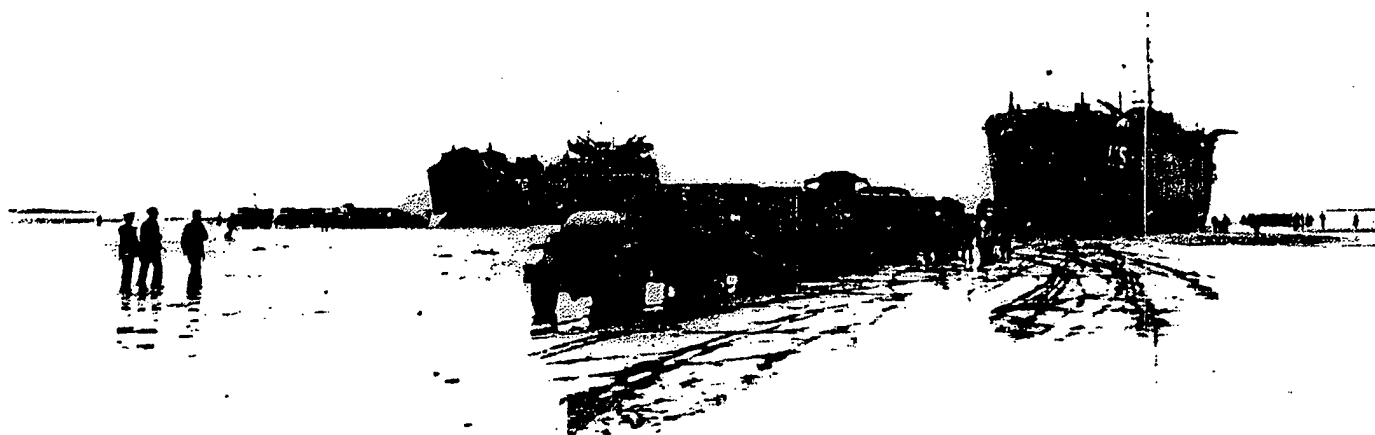
Remains of the city wall and the British  
 laser-thrust tanks were used very effectively against these positions.  
 and the British tanks on the city entrance.



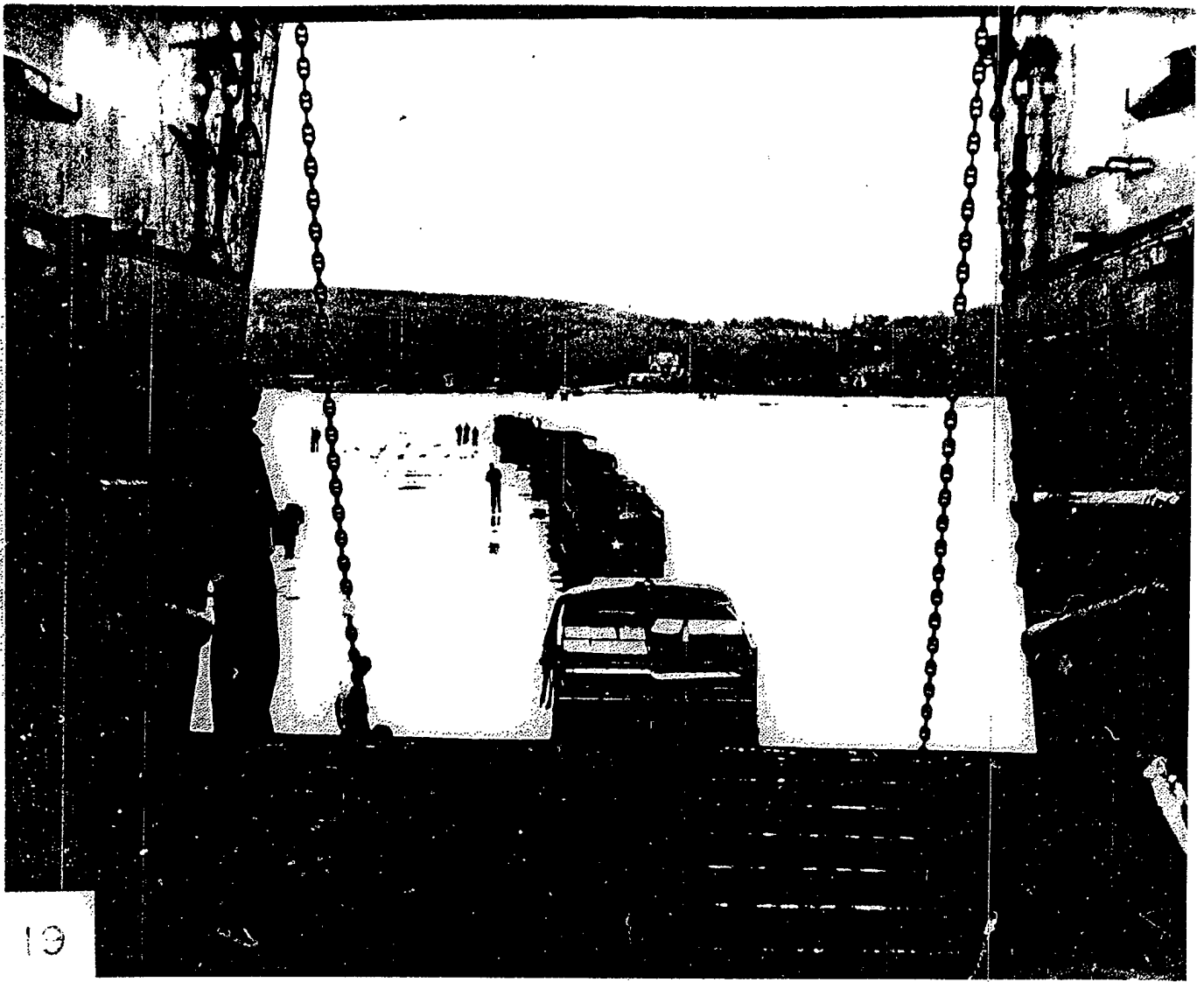




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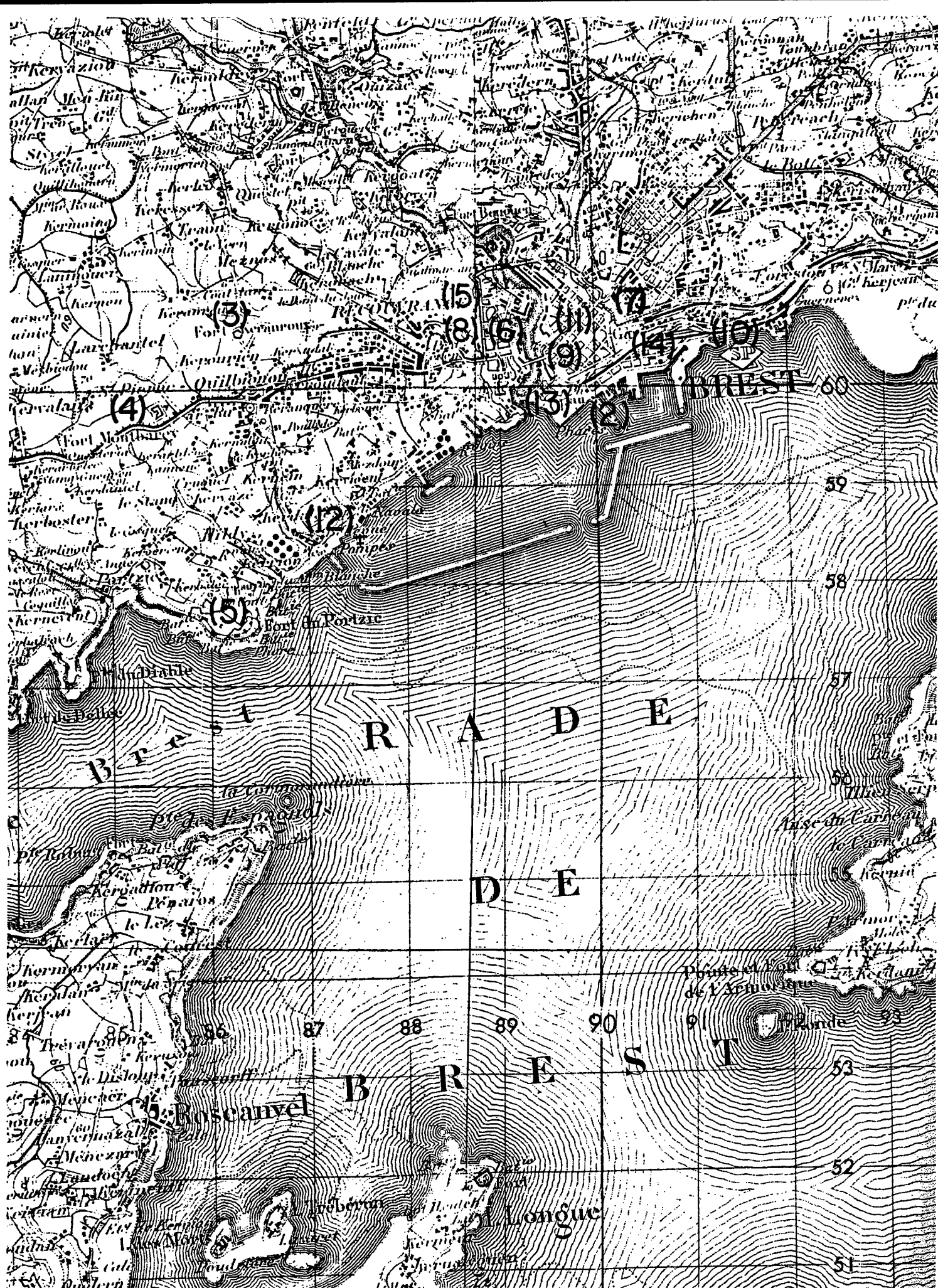
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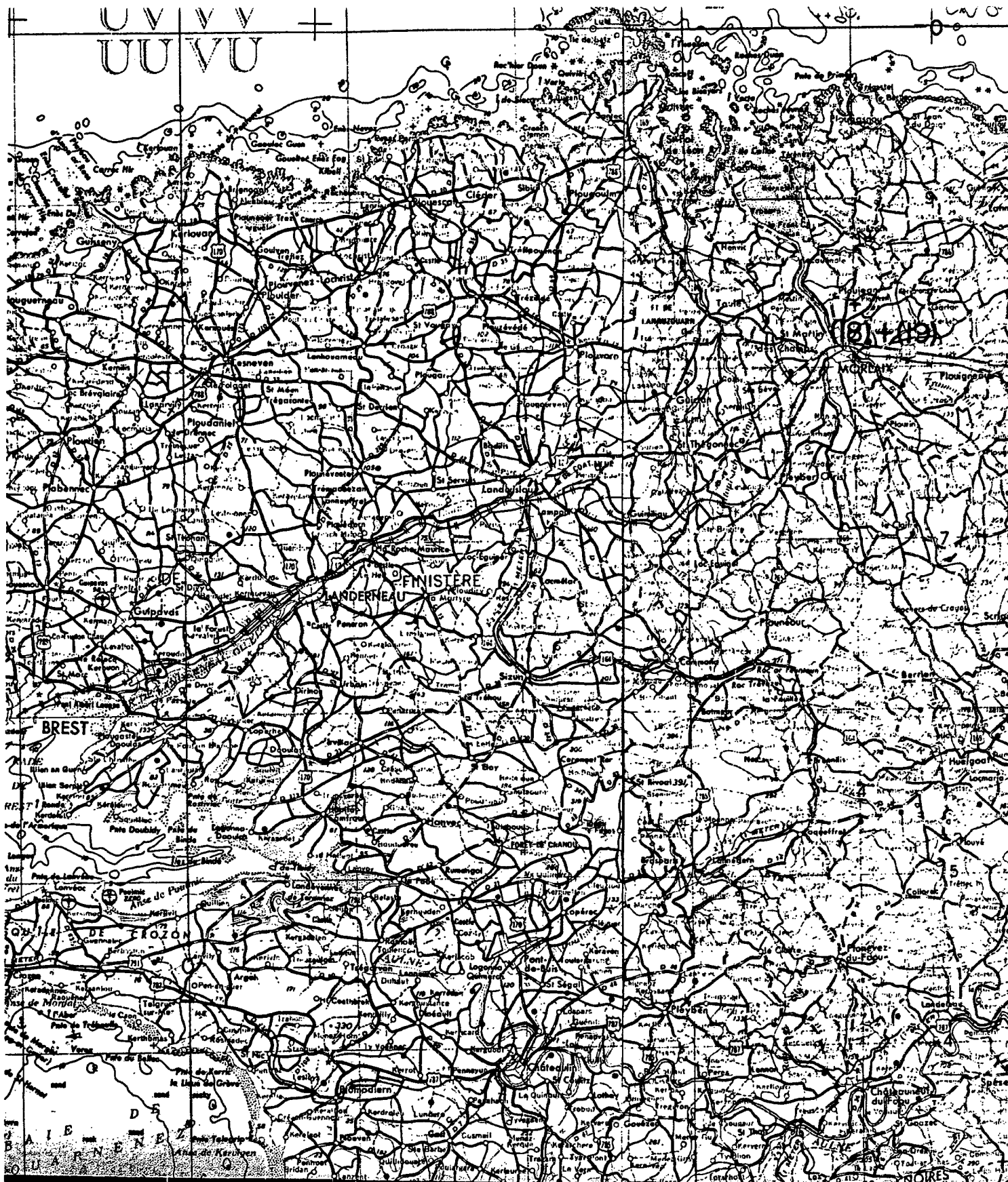


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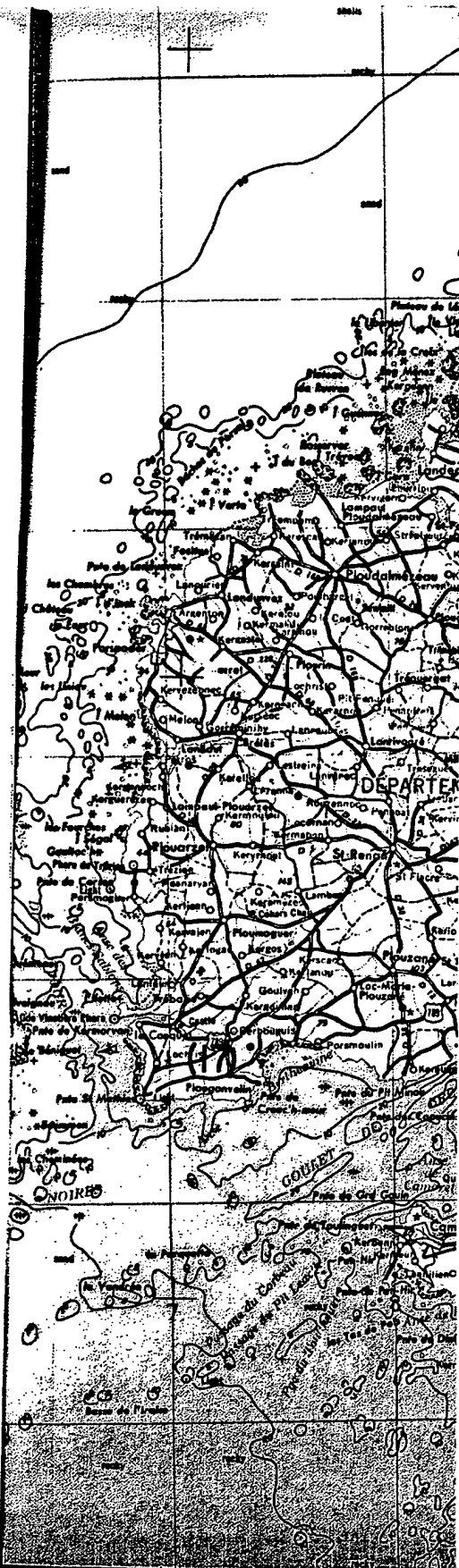
## Appendix E

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## Appendix F

### HEADQUARTERS VIII CORPS

U.S. Army,  
12 September 1944.

Lieutenant General Ramcke  
Commanding German Forces at Brest and on Crozon  
Peninsula.

Sir:

There comes a time in war when the situation reaches a point where a commander is no longer justified in expending the lives and destroying the health of the men who have bravely carried out his order in combat.

I have discussed with your officers and men, who have served you well and are now prisoners of war, the situation confronting the German garrison at Brest. These men are of the belief that the situation is hopeless and that there is nothing to be gained by prolonging the struggle. I therefore feel that the German garrison at Brest and on the Crozon peninsula no longer has a justifiable reason for continuing to fight.

Your men have fought well. Approximately 16,000 of them from this area are now prisoners of war. Your command has suffered casualties. You have lost much of the necessary implements of war and your men are encircled in a small, congested area. Therefore, it is the consensus of all that you and your command have fulfilled your obligation to your country.

In consideration of the preceding, I am calling upon you, as one professional soldier to another, to cease the struggle now in progress.

In accepting the surrender of Brest, I desire that your men lay down their arms and be assembled in proper military formation and marched under command of appropriate commanders to locations agreed upon by you and



by my representative who has handed you this communication. At the designated point, transport will convey the officers and men to the prisoner of war assembly point. For you and such members of your staff as you may designate, proper transportation will call at such place you may select.

I am sure that you realize the futility of continuing the battle. I also am of the opinion that you would prefer to surrender to American troops, led by a professional soldier, rather than to surrender to the FFI. I mention this fact, because at an early date, it may be decided to contain the German garrison at Brest with French Forces, and move the Americans elsewhere. I say this to you, because the Port of Brest has lost its value to the American Command, since so many ports elsewhere are in our hands.

I trust, as a professional soldier who has served well and who has already fulfilled his obligation, you will give this request your favorable consideration.

(s) Troy H. Middleton  
TROY H. MIDDLETON

Major General, U.S. Army,  
Commanding.

Translator's Note:

Above is copy of original letter of General Middleton. Captured German document also includes translation of this letter into German.

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